

Using action research to develop my solution-focused practice in collaboration with Year 6 and 7 pupils when discussing their behavioural self-regulation at school.

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A research study submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London for the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

Declaration.

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and it is not currently being submitted for any other degrees. This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London for the degree of Applied Educational and Child Psychology.

The thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is included in the thesis.

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Daniel Tully

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Abstract.

This action research study aimed to develop the researcher's use of solution-focused techniques when working with Year 6 and 7 pupils' self-regulation. A systematic literature review highlighted an evidence base that demonstrated the efficacy of solution-focused methods when working with this population. The researcher's intention was to add to the body of Educational Psychology practice-based evidence in this area.

The researcher recruited eight participants from primary and secondary school provisions. Solution-focused techniques were systematically trialled in partnership with the pupils and were modified through an action research cycle. Semi-structured interviewing provided participants the opportunity to critically evaluate the researcher's solution-focused practice. Thematic Analysis was used to assess feedback in order to adapt the delivery of solution-focused techniques.

Developments to practice explored within this study included modifications to the use of the six core components of Solution Focused Brief Therapy. Adaptations have the potential to inform the use of these solution-focused approaches with other educational practitioners.

Contents Page.

Chapter 1 Introduction... 1

- 1.1. Introduction to chapter... 1
- 1.2. Definitions of terms...1
 - 1.2.1. Self-regulation... 1
 - 1.2.2. Social Emotional and Mental Health... 2
 - 1.2.3. What is Solution Focused Brief Therapy?... 3
- 1.3. National context of this research... 4
 - 1.3.1. Recent legislation and Educational Psychology practice... 4
- 1.4. The local context and the development of solution-focused practice when training to become an Educational Psychologist... 5
- 1.5. Reflective practice and action research...6
- 1.6. Researcher's position...7
- 1.7. The purpose of this research...8
- 1.8. The research question... 8

Chapter 2 Literature review...10

- 2.1. Aims and overview of literature review... 10
- 2.2. The theoretical and conceptual background of Solution Focused Brief Therapy... 10
- 2.3. Systematic literature review... 11
 - 2.3.1. Databases, web-based sources and search engines used... 12
 - 2.3.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria... 12
 - 2.3.3. Identification of studies relevant to this research... 13
 - 2.3.4. Critical analysis of studies that validate the use for a solution-focused approach for Year 6 and 7 pupils' self-regulation development... 13
 - 2.3.5. Summary of the above 16 studies to provide a rationale for this work...21
 - 2.3.6. Previous solution-focused action research... 23
 - 2.3.7. Key learning from the four AR studies... 26
 - 2.3.8. Critique of the literature review... 27
- 2.4. Other literature relevant to this study... 27
- 2.5. The relevance of this action research project for Educational Psychologists...29
- 2.6. Summary of literature review... 30

Chapter 3. Methodology... 31

- 3.1. Introduction to chapter... 31
- 3.2. Practice-based evidence... 31
- 3.3. Research design... 32
- 3.4. Philosophical position / research paradigm... 33
 - 3.4.1. Ontology... 33
 - 3.4.2. Epistemology... 33
 - 3.4.3. Theoretical position... 35
- 3.5. Further information related to the theory and evidence-base for action research as a methodological tool... 36
- 3.6. Data collection and analysis procedures... 37
 - 3.6.1. Overall summary of procedure for action research cycles... 39
 - 3.6.2. Brief summary of subsidiary phases in-between each of the three solution-focused sessions with pupils... 39
 - 3.6.3. Qualitative data collection and Thematic Analysis... 40
 - 3.6.3.1. The interviews... 40

3.6.3.2. Details of Thematic Analysis...	40
3.6.4. School and participant selection criteria...	42
3.6.5. Recruitment procedure summary...	44
3.6.6. Sampling methods...	44
3.6.7. Consideration of validity and reliability issues...	44
3.7. Ethical considerations...	46
3.8. Summary of methodology...	47

Chapter 4. The action research process / Findings... 49

4.1. Introduction...	49
4.2. Action research cycle 1...	49
4.2.1. Cycle 1 subsidiary learning phase...	49
4.2.2. Cycle 1 interview data collection and first Thematic Analysis ...	52
4.2.2.1. Step 1: Becoming familiar with cycle 1 data...	52
4.2.2.2. Step 2: Generating initial codes...	53
4.2.2.3. Step 3. Searching for themes...	56
4.2.2.4. Step 4. Reviewing themes...	60
4.2.2.5. Step 5. Final thematic map...	62
4.2.3. Summary of cycle 1...	62
4.2.3.1. Key findings and modifications to solution-focused practice for cycle 2...	62
4.2.3.2. Moving on to cycle 2...	65
4.3. Aims of cycle 2...	65
4.3.1. Subsidiary phases within cycle 2 utilising learning from cycle 1...	66
4.3.2. Cycle 2 data collection and second Thematic Analysis...	68
4.3.2.1. Step 1: Becoming familiar with cycle 2 data...	68
4.3.2.2. Step 2: Generating initial codes...	68
4.3.2.3. Step 3. Searching for themes...	71
4.3.2.4. Further re-coding within Step 3...	71
4.3.2.5. Coding evidence to support theme choices...	71
4.3.2.6. Step 4. Reviewing themes...	72
4.3.2.7. Step 5. Final thematic map...	73
4.3.3. Summary of cycle 2...	74
4.3.3.1. Key findings and implications for possible adaptations of practice for ongoing solution-focused work beyond cycle 2...	74
4.4. Overall summary of findings...	76

Chapter 5. Discussion... 78

5.1. Introduction to chapter ...	78
5.2. Discussion and critique of research findings...	78
5.2.1. Reflections on modifications to the use of resource activation...	78
5.2.2. Examples / critique of methods of resource activation during cycle 1...	79
5.2.3. Discussion of further adaptations to resource activation...	80
5.2.4. The inclusion of resources located beyond the school setting...	80
5.2.5. Multi-sensory methods of resource activation...	81
5.2.6. Considering the pace of the session in terms of resource activation...	82
5.2.7. Encouraging 'spontaneous creative (lateral) thinking' in terms of resource activation...	83
5.2.8. Further adaptations to resource activation...	84

5.3. Reflections on goal setting when using the miracle question and preferred-future questioning...	84
5.3.1. Examples and critique of miracle question usage for goal setting...	85
5.3.2. Modification to language delivery of miracle question reflecting the need to improve client ownership of goals...	85
5.3.3. Frequency of miracle question use...	86
5.3.4. Multi-sensory use of miracle question reflecting the need to improve client ownership of goals...	86
5.3.5. Encouraging pupil autonomy...	87
5.4. Modifications to the use of finding exceptions to pupils' problems in solution-focused practice...	87
5.4.1. Examples and critique of methods of exception finding throughout cycle 1 and 2...	88
5.4.2. Adaptations utilising participant peer-group support...	88
5.5. The use of scaling in solution-focused practice...	89
5.5.1. Examples and critique of modifications to scaling...	89
5.5.2. Clarity of scaling description...	89
5.5.3. The use of scaling beyond a one to one context...	89
5.5.4. Support for scaling beyond a one to one context...	90
5.5.5. Multi-sensory scaling using colour to develop pupil autonomy...	90
5.6. Modifications to the use of a break for reflection...	92
5.7. Modifications to the agreement of next steps ...	92
5.7.1. Examples and critique of modifications based on cycle 1 learning...	92
5.7.2. Support structures for actioning of next steps...	93
5.7.3. Parental support adaptations...	95
5.7.4. Co-construction of next steps modifications...	96
5.8. Evaluation of methodology...	96
5.8.1. Questioning the validity of this action research study...	96
5.8.2. Individual one to one session validity...	97
5.8.3. Validity of the interview process...	98
5.8.4. Challenges that were faced throughout the interviewing process...	99
5.8.5. Ethical considerations and the researcher in a position of power...	100
5.8.6. Sample homogeneity...	101
5.8.7. Audit trail, rigour and a consideration of direct-application...	101
5.8.8. Thematic Analysis validity...	101
5.8.9. Evaluation of Thematic Analysis phases (1-5)...	102
5.8.10. Implications of using qualitative approaches to validity...	104
5.9. Feedback of study...	104
5.9.1. To pupils, parents and school...	105
5.9.2. To Educational Psychology Service and University of East London Educational Psychology trainees and faculty members...	105
5.10. The relevance and implications of this work for Educational Psychologists ...	105
5.10.1. Implications for this researcher...	105
5.10.2. Implications for the wider Educational Psychology community...	106
5.11. Conclusions...	107

References...	112
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Appendices...	121
Appendix A. Summary of systematic literature searching...	122
Appendix B. Head teacher Information Sheet and consent form...	124
Appendix C. Parents/carers and pupil Information Sheet and consent form...	126
Appendix D. UEL ethical approval form...	130
Appendix E. Research diary entry...	132
Appendix F. Margie's data transcript...	133
Appendix G. Margie's code-book continued...	138
Appendix H. 'Post-it' note example of initial theme grouping...	141
Appendix I. Initial thematic map...	142
Appendix J. Copy of the final thank you letter sent to the participants...	143

List of abbreviations.

AR	action research
SF	solution-focused
SR	self-regulation
UK	United Kingdom
SEMH	Social Emotional Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
BESD	Behavioural Emotional Social Difficulties
DfE	Department for Education
SFBT	Solution Focused Brief Therapy
USA	United States of America
EP	Educational Psychologist
YP	young people/person
BPS	British Psychological Society
TA	Thematic Analysis
EBTA	European Brief Therapy Association
SDT	Self Determination Theory
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
UEL	University of East London
EARS	Elicit Amplify Reinforce Start over
EB	externalising behaviour
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
MQ	miracle question
PI	Personal Investigator
SFBTA	Solution Focused Brief Therapy Association
BPS	British Psychological Society
SOLAR	Sit attentively; Open posture; Leaning forward; Eye contact; Relaxed body language
SMART	specific measurable and realistic targets.
EPNET	email discussion lists for the UK Education and Research communities
QE	quasi-experimental

List of Figures.

- Figure 1.** Action reflection cycle ... 32
Figure 2. Extract from Margie's code-book... 54
Figure 3. Interaction thematic map... 60
Figure 4. Pace thematic map... 60
Figure 5. Questioning thematic map... 61
Figure 6. Systemic thematic map... 61
Figure 7. Cycle 1 final thematic map... 62
Figure 8. Developed thematic map... 72
Figure 9. Cycle 2 final thematic map with sub-themes... 74
Figure 10. Scaling modification using colour... 91
Figure 11. Copy of Blue's SF target setting sheet... 94

List of Tables.

- Table 1.** Categories of interest and related terms for the systematic article search... 12
Table 2. Quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method article summary... 14
Table 3. Outline of previous action research studies... 23
Table 4. Codes developed from Margie's interview data... 55
Coding Tables 5-8. Codes that supported theme generation... 58
Table 5. Examples of codes that supported the theme of Interaction... 54
Table 6. Examples of codes that supported the theme of Pace... 54
Table 7. Examples of codes that supported the theme of Systemic... 55
Table 8. Examples of codes that supported the theme of Questioning... 55
Table 9. Cycle 2 participant data extracts, initial codes and re-coding evidence... 69
Table 10. Key modifications to the core components of SFBT...108

Chapter 1. Introduction.

1.1. *Introduction to chapter.*

This research focuses on the improvement of the researcher's use of solution-focused (SF) techniques when working with young peoples' self-regulation (SR) development. This chapter will open the discussion around the topic which the researcher has set out to explore. It will begin with definitions of key terms and move into an explanation of the relevant legislation necessary. The researcher will then delineate the reasons for this study. This will include a brief outline of where the journey of using action research (AR) began and the development of this researcher's solution-focused practice. The chapter will conclude by setting out the research question.

1.2. *Definition of key terms.*

1.2.1. *Self-regulation.*

According to Blair and Diamond (2008) the concept of self-regulation (SR) consists of cognitive and behavioural processes that allow an individual to maintain optimal levels of emotional well-being, motivation and cognitive arousal. SR capacities include the ability to control impulses and pay attention to environmental stimuli. Increasingly, through the various stages of life, young people need to learn how to work on their SR in such areas as better independent learning, successful navigation of social interaction, longer periods of attention to learning tasks and stronger skills in adapting creatively to school routines and disciplines.

SR may also involve goal-oriented behaviours (Matthews, Ponitz, & Morrison, 2009). SR has been described as "a deep internal mechanism that underlies mindful, intentional and thoughtful behaviours which allow the capacity to both stop the behaviour or start something new" (Harrison & Muthinvhi, 2013, pp. 80-81). UK government initiatives such as Social Inclusion, Raising Attainment and Alternatives to Exclusion, have highlighted the need to offer and enable further support mechanisms for pupils with SR challenges. There is growing momentum towards a more proactive focus on the social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils. The introduction of emotional well-being into the 2015 SEN

Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department of Health) reflects and beckons in a new arena of professional policy development alongside the well established areas of assessment, curriculum, school performance, accountability, school status and safeguarding domains.

1.2.2. *Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).*

Trainee Educational Psychologists operate within the 2014 Children and Families Act. In visits to schools, this researcher has worked with school staff and families within the framework of the new Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) to co-construct and identify outcomes for pupils. The term 'Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties' (BESD) has recently been replaced by 'Social Emotional and Mental Health' (SEMH). This is with a view to consider the behaviour messages of underlying and unmet social, emotional or mental health issues.

The Department for Education definition of SEMH reads as,

Children and young people who may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many different ways. These include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention disorder, attention deficit and hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder (DfE and DoH, 2015, p98).

The above definition from the Department of Education (DfE) sets out a broad range of young peoples' SEMH challenges. This doctoral research looked at pupils with social and emotional needs and not mental health difficulties. The revised Code of Practice highlights the fact that schools are a major part of the initial 'Tier 1' response along the continuum of well-being for each young person (DfE and DoH, 2015). The Code of Practice requires schools to consider any causal factors that may lead to a pupil presenting with social and/or emotional challenges. There is an emphasis on understanding the nature of individual

need in order to work out what actions are needed and not necessarily to fit a pupil into a specific category.

When allocating participants to this research study, school special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) of the two schools taking part in the study were asked to consider the revised Code of Practice category of SEMH and then refer pupils whose self-regulatory challenges were in accordance with this definition in terms of their enduring social and emotional needs. The participants were not on the schools SEN register but were being considered for this and were referred as a proactive response to their self-regulatory challenges.

1.2.3. *What is Solution Focused Brief Therapy?*

According to Kim and Franklin (2009) Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) is essentially a 'strengths-based' approach emphasising the positive resources that people inherently possess and how these resources can be used to create solutions to their challenges that may have been previously been labelled as 'problems'.

SFBT was developed in the United States of America (USA) in the 1980s by Steve de Shazer and Kim Insoo Berg who were Social Workers. De Shazer and Berg were interested in therapeutic communication through the use of 'strength-based' co-constructed language, collaborative goal setting and solution-building dialogue and questioning (Kim & Franklin, 2009). According to de Shazer, (1991) solution-focused thinking posits the idea that people are experts in their own lives and that solutions should be co-constructed by both the client and therapist. De Shazer and his colleagues were interested in reframing the 'problem' concept in terms of the co-construction of client-directed solutions rather than the therapist simply solving problems for the client.

This researcher became interested in developing the use of positive psychological SF techniques and working towards offering these new perspectives of viewing and responding differently to the well documented problem-laden arena of behaviour issues in schools. SFBT will be explored in greater depth in chapter 2.

1.3. *National context of this research.*

According to Cassidy (2012), young people in the UK are becoming more involved in decisions about their own lives and are increasingly seen as having important ideas and experiences to share. UK government legislation has attempted to facilitate this process. For example, the 1981 Education Act stated that young people should be consulted on educational provision and their feelings and perceptions should be taken into account. The new Children and Family Act (2015) recently emphasised the importance of children, young people and their families being involved in decisions regarding goal setting and person-centred outcomes. However the level and complexity of participation and involvement of young people is not discussed in detail within these policy documents. Reference is made to the involvement needed appropriate to the child's age, maturity and cognitive ability, leaving practitioners to their own interpretation of this guidance. Milner and Bateman (2011) refer to practitioners often espousing to work in child-centred ways. According to Milner and Bateman (2011) the children's evaluations of the practitioner's involvement often does not support this position.

1.3.1. *Recent legislation and Educational Psychology practice.*

As already stated the recent Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) encourages more emphasis on voicing the views of the children and young people. It has become common practice for Educational Psychologists to gain the views of the child or young person that they are working with. As a trainee EP the researcher has been in a position to be able to gather pupils' views related to the research goal of developing SF practice.

A key aim therefore of this research was to consider the involvement and consultative contributions of young people in the development of the researcher's SF practice.

EPs utilise a range of different methods to elicit the views of the young people they engage with. However their involvement with a child or young person is more than gathering views. EPs may plan and deliver a therapeutic approach to

intervention in terms of supporting pupils' social and emotional needs in greater depth. This type of EP practice became integral to this research design.

1.4. The local context and the development of solution-focused practice when training to become an Educational Psychologist.

During the researcher's first year of EP training he had the opportunity to use SF techniques when working with pupils. This involved two separate interventions to develop Year 6 and Year 7 pupils' SR within the context of school transition. In the course of this work the researcher experienced positive anecdotal feedback from the children, school staff and parents.

In the 2nd and 3rd year EP trainee placement in a London Local Authority borough, the researcher decided to attempt to further develop SF practice as part of his doctoral research project.

EP practice incorporates several frameworks of service delivery. Most models have focused on problem-solving or problem-centred methods. Since the 1970s Educational Psychology as a profession began to move away from a medically oriented deficit-focus of practice towards one that also included intervention and positive change (Stobie, Boyle & Woolfson, 2005). Up to the present day UK EPs have reported using solution-focused approaches in their work alongside the well-established problem-solving models (Stobie, Boyle & Woolfson, 2005). The establishment of the Brief Therapy Practice in London in the 1990s created training opportunities for EPs to study the techniques of SFBT. The effectiveness of SF approaches in various elements of EP practice, added to the fact that it adopts the valued deficit-free approach, has led to its inclusion in many of the EP doctorate training course syllabuses (Stobie, Boyle & Woolfson, 2005).

A UK based research survey conducted by Stobie et al (2005) found that a direct individualised approach with children or young people represented the most frequent type of SFBT used in UK EP practice. Stobie et al (2005) documented that EPs often incorporate SF techniques with children, parents and school staff. A more recent UK study by Atkinson, Corban and Templeton (2011) looked at the increasing interest and focus on the role of the EP as a therapeutic

tic provider in line with the government focus on social and emotional wellbeing. An online questionnaire distributed to all UK Educational Psychology Services received 455 responses.

When asked, “Do you use therapeutic interventions as part of your current professional practice?” an overwhelming 92% of the participants answered ‘Yes’ (Atkinson et al, 2011).

When questioned, “How have you used therapeutic intervention?”, over 80% declared that they used therapeutic tools during individual direct work with children and young people. Another point of relevance to this research is that EP participants in the Atkinson et al study (2011) recorded using SFBT at least 20% more often than Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or other associated therapeutic approaches to intervention.

The EP Yasmin Ajmal (2004) points out that expecting a child or YP to bear the burden of SR change individually or in isolation is unrealistic. She advocates the use of SF approaches and posits further that both family and school need to be motivated to work together on the issue of enhancing the pupils’ chances of positive change. The use of SF approaches therefore could be considered to be an alternative contribution when supporting social and emotional intervention in schools. Ajmal (2004) also stated that working in schools provides unique opportunities for the creative and systemic use of SFBT.

Stobie et al (2005) note that SF research by EPs is currently, however, in an embryonic stage and in need of development and expansion. They also suggest a need for more EP-based research in this area.

1.5. *Reflective practice and action research.*

Action research as a methodology evolved over a considerable period of the 20th Century and on into the 21st. Kurt Lewin is widely regarded to have coined the term action research (AR) in the 1940s. AR was first used in education in the 1950’s (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Stephen Corey’s (1953) seminal text *Action Research to Improve School Practices* became influential in the USA (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). In the 1970s AR was taken up by Lawrence Stenhouse, who worked in the field of education and teacher professional develop-

ment. AR later became known as a type of practical research underpinned by practice-based evidence other than being seen solely as research relying on evidence-based practice. It provided the opportunities for educational practitioners to utilise their own professional wisdom and to develop new forms of practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

Action research provided an appropriate platform to improve the researcher's SF practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). The researcher's aim was to develop his SF practice by learning from the feedback of the pupils involved in this research. McNiff & Whitehead (2011) noted that "practitioner knowledge is central to practical and theoretical evolution" (p21). Exploring and developing SF practice seemed therefore to align with the self-transformational capacities of first-person action research.

1.6. *Researcher's position.*

When this researcher began his research journey there were professional practice-based questions that need to be reflected upon and considered. Once the research arena was chosen the researcher considered his philosophical stance in terms of what paradigm of research he would align himself within. This researcher chose a critical-realist ontology which will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 3.

According to McNiff and Whitehead (2011) a theory is seen as "a set of ideas about what we claim to know and how we have come to know" (p23). When using action research the practice of the researcher is the basis for their own theory development. This has been called a 'living theory' (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011) These 'living theories' provide a richer and more holistic view of the real-life situation that the participants and the researcher are involved in. This research enhanced and enabled the researcher to move towards a clearer vision of the researcher's own set of 'living theories' which helped the development of his SF practice.

1.7. *The purpose of this research.*

This research aimed to specifically focus on Year 6 and 7 participants' own self-regulatory processes that they themselves wished to develop. It was the researcher's intention to develop his use of solution-focused techniques throughout this process using the methodology of action research. Feedback gathered from the young people after two cycles of SF intervention with the participants was gathered and analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA) in order to enhance the researcher's use of SF techniques.

1.8. *The research question.*

According to McNiff and Whitehead (2011) research should be "a developmental process where nothing stands still" (p121). AR posits that original research questions often go through transformations due to the impact of the modification processes that the researcher adheres to over the course of carrying out their research. This has also been described as progressive-focusing (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977). Taking up this position the research question evolved over time. It moved away from being not only related to the participants' SR development but more towards using the pupils' responses to enable the researcher's own SF practice enhancement and development.

McNiff and Whitehead (2011) also stated that there is an importance in the researcher taking action for their own personal, professional and wider social benefit.

The chief focus of this study was for the researcher to take action towards his own SF practice development through the investigation of the following research question:

How can I use first person action research to develop solution-focused practice in collaboration with Year 6 and 7 pupils when discussing their behavioural self-regulation at school?

This researcher explored which techniques and approaches that could be used with young people and how these could be adapted based on feedback received from the participants themselves. The researcher set out with the intention of creating collaborative processes which used the young peoples' opinions and expertise to provide opportunities to enhance the researcher's solution-focused skills.

Chapter 2. Literature review.

2.1. *Aims and overview of the literature review.*

A number of themes related to relevant previous literature will be considered in this literature review. Section 2.2 will provide an overview of SFBT's philosophical outlook and conceptual framework. It will also provide further details of the six core components of SFBT. Section 2.3 delineates the systematic literature review. This literature review locates previous research where SF approaches were used to develop young peoples' SR. The efficacy of studies found will be evaluated in order to demonstrate the appropriateness of using SF techniques to support the development of Year 6 and 7 pupils' SR. This will involve looking first at previous quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods SF research (see section 2.3.4) and then funnelling down thematically to previous SF action research (see section 2.3.6) within the topic domain. The studies will be critically evaluated in chronological order to place on record how SF research took place over time. This does not imply however that each research paper necessarily builds on or evolves from the previous paper. The researcher will discuss how these studies made use of the core components of SFBT in an attempt to learn from previous work in this area. This chapter will also analyse further literature relevant to the researcher's SF practice development. It will end by considering the relevance of this action research project for Educational Psychologists.

2.2. *The theoretical and conceptual background of SFBT.*

SFBT is based on over thirty years of world-wide theoretical development, clinical practice and research (European Brief Therapy Association EBTA, 2012). SFBT was developed inductively rather than deductively by Steve De Shazer and his colleagues who spent thousands of hours observing and recording therapy sessions and identifying behaviours or dialogues that reliably led to positive therapeutic change (EBTA, 2012). A collection of successful techniques evaluated over time became the core components of SFBT. Central to the evolution of SFBT was the idea of working with client-centred goals in order to develop co-constructed uniquely appropriate, more effective solutions (EBTA, 2012). SFBT was congruent with Milton Erickson's ideas related to the inherent

resources people have and how these can be utilised to effect positive change (Grandison, 2007).

There is an ongoing debate around the theoretical and conceptual orientation of SFBT. De Shazer and Berg (1997) argued that SFBT has no need for a theory to explain its origins whereas others such as Visser (2010) argued that SFBT could be viewed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Visser (2010) stated that the processes of SFBT supported clients' perceptions of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Similarly to SFBT, Ryan and Deci (2008) posited that SDT provided empirically informed guidelines and principles for motivating clients to explore experiences and make adaptive changes towards their goals, behaviours, and relationships. Grandison (2007) proposed that SFBT had three broad theoretical underpinnings incorporating constructivism, social constructivism and systems theory. Therefore it could be posited that clients who experience SFBT construct their own meanings when interacting with their social context. Further to this point they select, interpret and re-shape social information and meaning to create a better future in a self-directed manner (De Shazer & Berg (1997).

For the purposes of this research the six core components of SFBT will be utilised as advocated by De Shazer and Berg (1997) to include:

- 1: Resource activation to locate pupil strengths.
- 2: Goal setting including preferred future questioning such as the miracle question to imagine a preferred future.
- 3: Exploring exceptions to problems.
- 4: Scaling to prioritise goals and measure progress.
- 5: Break for reflection so that participants can consider their work so far.
- 6: Agreement of next steps towards SR goals.

2.3. Systematic literature review.

The systematic literature review will add evidence-based validation of the use of the six core components of SFBT within the context of working with Year 6 and 7 pupil SR development.

2.3.1. Databases, web-based sources and search engines used.

Prior to literature searching, the types of documents applicable to this area of research were established. These included academic journal studies and doctoral theses. The selection criteria included searching for studies where SFBT was used as an approach for intervention to develop young peoples' self-regulation skills. The search parameters went beyond the UK and incorporated studies published from Europe and the USA after and including 1999. Randomised controlled trials, quasi-experimental designs, single case-studies, action research and qualitative designs were all considered. Four electronic databases were used to undertake the systematic literature review. These included Ebscohost, Scopus, Google and Google Scholar.

2.3.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Search terms were divided into three categories relating to 1) Solution Focused Brief Therapy 2) self-regulation 3) intervention. See Table 1 to view the list of words and/or phrases that were utilised for literature searching.

Table 1. Categories of interest and related terms for the systematic article search.

Categories of interest and related terms.	Related Terms
1) Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT)	SFBT; SF approaches; SF Therapy; Solution Oriented Therapy; Solution Oriented Brief Therapy; Solution Oriented approaches.
2) Self-regulation	Self-regulation; emotional regulation; behaviour regulation; behaviour/behavior; externalising behaviour; oppositional behaviour; defiant behaviour; at risk students.
3) Intervention	Intervention; programme; interview; action research; childrens' perceptions.

Throughout the searching process relevant literature was filtered by using the following inclusion criteria:

- Published in the English language
- Published in the period 1999-2016
- Including 11 or 12 year olds (Directly or indirectly)
- SFBT approaches for SR intervention for both clinical and non-clinical populations.

Conversely, studies were not included if they met the following exclusion criteria:

- Published in a language other than English
- Published outside of the period 1999-2016
- Not including 11 or 12 year olds (Directly or indirectly)
- Did not involve the use of SFBT for self-regulation intervention for either clinical or non-clinical populations.

2.3.3. *Identification of studies relevant to this research.*

Boolean phrases and snowball searching were used to locate previous studies relevant to the topic area. When searching systematically using the EBSCO database 14 relevant studies were identified from 1323 hits. Snowball searching found 1 relevant study. When searching SCOPUS using boolean phrases 3 relevant studies were identified from 135 hits. Snowball searching using Google Scholar found 1 relevant additional study. A recent University of East London (UEL) Doctoral Thesis by Barton in 2015 was also included in the literature review. Therefore a total of 20 articles, 16 quantitative, qualitative and mixed-mixed method studies and four action research projects will be evaluated in sections 2.3.4. and 2.3.6. See Appendix A for details of Boolean systematic literature searching.

2.3.4. *Critical analysis of studies that validate the use for a SF approach for Year 6 and 7 pupils' SR development.*

Table 2 summarises the quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method studies that will then be evaluated after Table 2 on the next page.

Table 2: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method article summary.

	STUDY	DESIGN	SR FOCUS	AGE	SIZE
1	Banks, 1999	Mixed methods	Externalising Behaviour EB	11-13	8
2	Corcoran & Stephenson, 2000	Quasi experimental (QE)	EB	5-17	56
3	Franklin et al, 2001	QE	EB	11-13	7
4	Demmons, 2003	Mixed methods	EB	9-11	5
5	Moore, 2004	QE	EB	10-12	67
6	Newsome, 2004	Quantitative	EB	11-13	26
7	Window et al, 2004	Qualitative	EB	5-12	22
8	Newsome, 2005	QE	EB	11-13	26
9	Concoran, 2006	Quantitative	EB	5-17	239
10	Atkinson & Ames, 2007	Qualitative	EB	11-13	1
11	Grandison 2007	Qualitative	EB	9-11	5
12	Franklin et al, 2008	QE	EB	10-12	30
13	Coyle et al, 2009	Mixed methods	EB	11-13	22
14	Cepukiene & Pakrošnis, 2010	QE	EB	12-18	92
15	Doveston, & Keenaghan, 2010	Qualitative	EB	4-18	5
16	Kvarme et al, 2010	QE	Withdrawn behaviours	12-13	144

A North American survey design by Banks (1999) used SFBT in a group setting to reduce bullying behaviour as part of the participants' self-regulation (SR) development. A group of eight 12 year old students met once a week over the course of four weeks. The study utilised all six core components of SFBT. Banks (1999) suggested that SFBT carried out in a group context encouraged the pupils to utilise peer support strategies when actioning their SR goals. Survey data six months post intervention suggested a 50% increase in positive SR

behaviours. Bank's (1999) work highlights the efficacy of using SF techniques with groups of pupils as well as the utility of peer support strategies.

Corcoran and Stephenson's (2000) quantitative North American study utilised family therapy sessions using four SFBT core components with 56 family groups. Significant improvements post SFBT intervention were found on the 'Conners Parent Rating Scale' for conduct, learning and impulsivity-hyperactivity. The 'Feelings, Attitudes, and Behaviors Scale for Children' measure noted positive self-image improvements. Methodological limitations included the lack of a control group (Corcoran & Stephenson, 2000).

A quantitative single case design by North American researchers Franklin, Biever, Moore, Clemons and Scamardo (2001) provided SFBT to support seven 10-13 year old pupils' behavioural change. The school-based study lacked a control or comparison group and instead focused on seven individual case studies. The study incorporated four out of the six core SFBT components. Conners Teacher Rating Scale analysis showed positive but not significant changes in behaviour for five out of the seven cases (Franklin et al, 2001). A limitation of the study was that positive behaviours were noted by teachers only and not the participants. This potentially corrupted the validity of measurement outcomes in that the researchers could not demonstrate that the intervention itself was the reason for any positive changes. Franklin et al (2001) commented that solution-focused approaches held promise for supporting student SR development.

A US mixed-methods design by Demmons (2003) explored the effects of six sessions of SFBT group therapy with the researcher acting as facilitator. 'Behavioural and Emotional Screening System' checklists were gathered from parents, teachers, and children pre- and post intervention. In addition to this interview data was analysed using an inductive process of case study analysis involving case descriptions, explicit interpretation, categorical aggregation, pattern searching, and observational generalisations (Demmons, 2003). Findings indicated that the group experience was perceived positively by all the children and three children reported statistically significant increases on their 'Behavioural and Emotional Screening System' reports. The study yet again highlight-

ed the efficacy of using SFBT for SR development in schools (Demmons, 2003).

A quasi-experimental North American study by Moore (2004) evaluated the impact of individual SFBT sessions on 67 middle school children SR. 34 pupils received between five to eight sessions and 33 pupils were assigned to a no treatment comparison group. The sessions utilised four of the six SFBT core components. Solution-focused teacher-training ran alongside the individual sessions to widen the impact of the programme. Child Behaviour Checklist results revealed large effect sizes on both the teacher and pupil behaviour checklist. Limitations of the study include the possibility that teacher and therapist consultations throughout the study may have biased teacher ratings (Moore, 2004).

A North American study by Newsome (2004) used SFBT in a group setting to attempt to develop students' self-regulation capacities related to their grade progression. A quasi-experimental pre and post test comparison group design investigated the differences between 26 pupils (aged 11-12) receiving SFBT and a control group not receiving any intervention. Two groups of 13 pupils met once a week for eight weeks for 35 minutes. The study utilised all six core components. The facilitator's use of purposeful and goal-oriented questions helped to co-construct participant preferred-futures therefore empowering the pupils to recognise their own academic strengths (Newsome, 2004). An exception finding technique entitled EARS (i.e., elicit, amplify, reinforce and start over) was used to reinforce pupils' present and future progression. Scaling questions were extended and revisited using methods such as 'a letter from an older, wiser self'. Newsome (2004) reported that SFBT intervention led to enhanced academic scores. Limitations of the research were outlined by Newsome (2004) to include selection bias and other maturation factors pertaining to increased grade scores from pre to post intervention.

A UK qualitative study by Window, Richards and Vostanis (2004) used thematic content analysis to establish the perceptions of children aged 5-12 and their parents following a family support intervention. A Solution Focused Brief Therapy model was utilised to support families with children presenting with complex

emotional and behavioural challenges. Results gathered from interview feedback suggested that individual work with the children over the course of six home visits helped to increase their coping strategies and abilities to generate solutions and had a positive impact on their SR. Window et al (2004) noted the importance of more direct involvement of children in their SF intervention and found the maturity and clarity of the young peoples' feedback surprisingly beneficial to SF practice development.

A North American quasi-experimental design by Newsome (2005) investigated whether or not SFBT intervention could increase pupils' positive classroom behaviours. Participants included children whose behaviour was interpreted as being the cause of both poor teacher-pupil relations and academic outcomes. The sample was split into four SFBT groups for eight sessions. The group sessions incorporated all six SFBT core components. The 'Social Skills Rating System' was completed by children and was used to measure social behaviours that affect teacher-student relations. 'Social Skills Rating System' results showed statistically significant improvements in positive behaviour relations between pupils and teachers from pre-test to post-test and six week follow-up. These results offer positive implications for SFBT intervention in schools (Newsome, 2005). However, the lack of a randomised control within the design, small sample size and the possible social desirability effects influencing the 'Social Skills Rating System' self-report measures represent possible limitations given the quantitative nature of Newsome's (2005) design.

A North American trainee social work study investigating pupil SR compared an experimental SFBT to a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy control intervention (Corcoran, 2006). The hypotheses for this quasi-experimental design were that both treatment engagement and behaviour improvement would be higher for the SFBT condition. 85 families completed between four and six sessions for both conditions (Corcoran, 2006). Behaviours were assessed using the 'Conners Parent Rating Scale' and the 'Feelings Attitudes Behaviours Scale for Children'. The SFBT intervention consisted of five out of six of the core components. Sessions were video-taped and utilised supervision sessions took place to develop practitioner SF skills (Corcoran, 2006). The study reported that randomised selections to each condition did not take place and acknowledges the

possible negative effects this may have had on treatment integrity. Statistical data analysis was used and found a non-significant difference between the experimental and comparison group. Findings noted that both groups made similar improvements on the behaviours measured. It was reported that the SFBT intervention had a significantly lower drop-out rate or higher treatment engagement compared to the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy condition (Corcoran, 2006).

A UK based case study design conducted by the Bury Educational Psychology Service led by Atkinson and Ames (2007) combined SF approaches with Motivational Interviewing. The study utilised scaling as a means of allowing the single participant, a 12 year old, to gauge his/her own progress with scaling targets set. The researchers utilised 'reverse scaling' as a method of developing awareness of the young person's vulnerabilities to relapse. Preferred-future questioning was used to visualise how life might be different with SR enhancement. Atkinson and Ames (2007) described this as a motivational incentive in which the likelihood of change was increased. The miracle question (MQ) was used as another method of encouraging the participant to begin to think about how life might be without their problem. The author's innovative use of the MQ included an activity entitled 'Deciding not to Change', where the client was asked to weigh up the pros and cons of SR development. Atkinson and Ames's (2007) case study illustrated the flexibility of SF approaches and how the responsibility of change should be owned by the young person. The authors note that a potential critique of SF approaches is that they are heavily reliant on language-based delivery. They recommended a multi-sensory approach when working with young people.

A UK qualitative, exploratory study by the Educational Psychologist Pam Grandison (2007) creatively combined two therapeutic approaches; Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing and SFBT. Both methods utilised scaling and sought to empower the participants. Six sessions were carried out with five children aged 9-11 in a group setting. Three SF core components were utilised. These were exception finding, scaling and the miracle question. Grandison (2007) reported that SFBT supported the participants' focus on positive experiences and their preferred futures. Interview results found that all the children

reported increased confidence levels. This was reiterated by teachers and parents. Grandison (2007) described how children in the study were able to use SF techniques to enhance school work and reduce anxiety. Grandison's (2007) work highlighted the possible utility of using SF approaches creatively in school contexts in schools when tackling SR development over a short period of time.

A North American quasi-experimental study by Franklin, Moore and Hopson (2008) compared a SFBT experimental sample with a control. The Child Behavior Check List, Teacher Report Form and the Youth Self Report were used to measure potential positive SR changes including fewer incidents of aggressive behaviour. The SF intervention involved seven individual sessions that incorporated five out of the seven SFBT core components. The sessions were carried out by Masters level SF therapists and were video-taped to maintain treatment fidelity (Franklin et al, 2008). The intervention also included solution-focused teacher training as well as teacher and parent SF consultations. These ran alongside the individual sessions. Results showed significant SR improvements for the experimental group which contrasted with the comparison group at both post test and follow-up with an overall effect size of 1.4. Although results seem promising a number of further limitations might limit the power of generalisation to other school contexts. These included no randomisation of participants for both experimental and comparison groups and also that gender may have been a confounding variable as the study contained significantly more boys than girls (Franklin et al, 2008).

An Irish study by Coyle, Doherty and Sharry (2009) explored 22 adolescent participants with a range of SR challenges and their individual use of a solution-focused computer game, 'Personal Investigator' (PI). PI utilised goal-oriented and strengths-based SF techniques. Additionally PI incorporated opportunities for exception finding and the miracle question. The study looked at whether or not PI assisted in easing the difficulties associated with direct face-to-face therapeutic approaches common with this age group. The authors suggest possible benefits of using computer games within a therapeutic context such as more successful engagement and cooperation, the development of more effective therapeutic relationships, an increase in attendance rates, an increase in self-confidence and self mastery, more willingness to accept responsibility, the dis-

placement of aggression and the development of problem solving skills (Coyle et al, 2009). The authors noted, “The flexibility to use computer games instead of straight talk is valuable. It emphasises opening communication barriers and joining adolescents at their level. It provides focus, and is in line with their interest level and adolescent methods of communication” (Coyle et al, 2009, p353). Findings from this study highlight the possible successes of using multi-sensory Information Communication Technology methods of delivery that young people may be more inclined to relate to and find relevant. A limitation of using computer games within a therapeutic context may include the possibility that participant engagement centres on the gaming and not the wider content of sessions (Coyle et al, 2009).

A Lithuanian study by Cepukiene and Pakrošnis (2010) investigated the therapeutic outcome of SFBT as an individual intervention for adolescent SR development. An experimental quasi-experimental design with a control matched age, gender and behaviour type. The study utilised three out of seven core SFBT components. Results showed that 31% of the adolescents who received SFBT experienced significant SR development compared to control group (Cepukiene & Pakrošnis, 2010).

Doveston and Keenaghan (2010) worked together with a focus group of Northampton (UK) EPs and teachers to develop a systemic resource entitled ‘Growing Talent for Inclusion’ in schools and community learning contexts. The programme was based on collaborative consultation, appreciative enquiry and SF thinking. The projects structure followed the management change process built into the appreciative-enquiry model, ‘Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny’ (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2010). The programme’s mandate included the promotion of more effective classroom interpersonal relationships by training five teachers with skills from the ‘Growing Talent for Inclusion’ approach. Teachers were tasked with supervising colleagues in their respective schools to identify and prioritise the emotional and social skill development work necessary to increase effective learning. Qualitative survey interview data was collected from all five teachers and analysed using what the authors describe as the Teacher Consultation Framework Tool (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2010). Almost all teacher participants stated that use of the miracle question aided teaching staff to re-

frame their perceptions about classroom behaviour problems more positively. Scaling was also utilised for measuring progress towards teachers' preferred futures. One teacher reported, "The scaling is very good, very visual, I think the scales's are the most important part of this ... because I think that scale says a lot more than what words can say sometimes" (Doveston & Keenagan, 2010, p135). The authors noted that utilising SF approaches is often a more productive use of time when working with pupils whose behaviour is perhaps more symptomatic of classroom dynamics rather than within-child factors.

A Norwegian study by Kvarme, Helseth, Sorum, Luth-Hansen, Haugland and Natvig (2010) incorporated a quasi-experimental design. Kvarme et al (2010) set out to explore the effects of a solution-focused group intervention on the self-efficacy of socially withdrawn children. Social withdrawal was defined as consistent solitary behaviour across situations with both familiar and unfamiliar peers (Kvarme et al, 2010). The study was a non-randomised controlled trial, with both experimental and control groups. Participant ages were 12-13. The study consisted of six consecutive weekly sessions of one hour. Pupils were asked to complete questionnaires assessing self-efficacy at baseline, at the end of the sixth session and after three months. Results found immediately significant increased self-efficacy scores for girls, but not for boys for the experimental group. There were only slight differences in scores for both sexes and control group after three months. Kvarme et al (2010) state their research shows that SF intervention has utility for self-regulatory development in socially withdrawn children, particularly for girls. However a possible limitation was that children making up both conditions of the study were often drawn from the same class. Kvarme et al (2010) note that this may have affected outcome scores as the children may have discussed elements of the intervention biasing questionnaire completion.

2.3.5. *Summary of the above 16 studies to provide a rationale for this work.*

The literature review in section 2.3.4 evaluated nine studies that incorporated a group approach to SF working. Findings from the majority of these studies suggested that working as a group using SF techniques was both a valid and viable approach. Key learning from these studies is hereby summarised. Banks (1999)

noted the utility of incorporating peer support strategies to complement SF work. Corcoran and Stephenson (2000) and Window et al (2004) emphasised the importance of involving wider family systems alongside SF approaches. Demmons (2003), Newsome (2005), Grandison (2007) and Kvarme et al (2010) all reported the ease in which SFBT techniques could be used successfully in schools. Newsome (2004) developed the exception finding core component of SFBT 'EARS' to support goal setting as well as citing adaptations to scaling. Corcoran (2006) highlighted the lower drop out rate of SFBT where the children participants appeared more motivated to engage with SFBT rather than CBT.

Section 2.3.4 also evaluated six previous studies that provided an evidence-base for using SF approaches in a one to one context to support the development of young peoples' SR. Key findings from these studies within the rationale of this AR work will now be summarised. Franklin et al (2001), Moore (2004) Franklin et al (2008) and Cepukiene and Pakrosnis (2008) all reported statistically significant and positive improvements to participants' SR resulting from one to one SFBT intervention. Atkinson and Amesu (2007) highlighted an innovative approach that combined SFBT with Motivational Interviewing. Atkinson and Amesu (2007) also cited the importance of pupil ownership of goal setting as well as the possibilities of using a multi-sensory approach to SFBT session delivery. Coyle et al (2009) noted the potential utility of incorporating computer technology to enhance the multi-sensory and motivational aspects of pupil engagement with SFBT.

Another study by Doveston and Keenaghan (2010), this time incorporating a SF approach for teachers and not pupils, encouraged the promotion of pupil SR development. Teachers reported positive outcomes when utilising the visual scaling SF technique with children.

The 16 studies evaluated in section 2.3.4 all appear to highlight the efficacy of using SFBT to support young peoples' SR in one to one, group and teacher focus group contexts. Six of the studies also demonstrated a variety of adaptations to the use of the core components of SFBT with young people. The evaluation of these 16 studies therefore provides a clear rationale to support both this

researcher's use of SFBT techniques with Year 6 and 7 pupils and the researcher's aim of modifying, improving and adapting SF practice.

2.3.6. *Previous solution-focused action research.*

Section 2.3.4. above outlined studies using SFBT for SR related intervention with Year 6 and 7 aged young people. This section will funnel down and critically analyse previous practice-based evidence that utilised the methodology of action research to develop SF techniques.

Table 3: Outline of previous action research studies.

	STUDY	DESIGN	SR FOCUS	AGE	SIZE
1	Burns & Hulusi, 2005	Action research	EB	11-16	4
2	Simm & Ingram, 2008	Action research	SR	Year 6 Teachers	5
3	Vallaire-Thomas et al, 2011	Action research	EB	10-14	10
4	Barton, 2015	Action research.	Moderate LD	12-18	10

Systematic searching for previous SF AR located four studies (see Table 3). The first was a small scale UK action research project originating from the Birmingham Educational Psychology Service. The study aimed to promote the effectiveness of a learning support centre within a secondary school (Burns & Hulusi, 2005). SF principles were used in a group context where participants worked on self-directed SR challenges rather than a fixed topic. The authors sought to utilise the SFBT philosophical assumption that views participants as experts in their own lives (Burns & Hulusi, 2005). The intervention consisted of four pupils between the age of 11-16. It was facilitated by two EPs alongside a learning centre manager. Hourly sessions ran for six weeks. Resources used included a flip-chart to make scaling more visual. Session structure included: problem-free talk; description of pupils 'miracle school day'; group activities to support the description of an individual's miracle were used such as role-play; solution-fo-

cused questioning and reflection; opportunities to rehearse the participants' preferred futures and to experience aspects of their 'miracle thinking'; scaling support and questioning to describe what they imagined would be different in their behaviour as they moved up their scale; opportunities to reflect on exceptions to problem behaviours, goal setting and a reflective break (Burns & Hulusi, 2005). Pupils were given the choice to share their goals and were offered support by their learning centre teachers in-between sessions. Outcomes of the intervention as reported by the researchers included a general increase in the four pupils scaling ratings of progression towards their preferred future and increased confidence of their ability to change. Burns and Hulusi (2005) noted that using a group approach proved a powerful means of encouraging participants to use SF language. They noted that involving teachers allowed for a greater connectedness between work undertaken in the support centre and wider school organisational structures. However they did not appear to explain how this actually happened. A limitation of the study was that it did not include parents as a support mechanism in-between sessions. Burns and Hulusi (2005) also point out the potential merits of training teachers in solution-focused approaches so as to impact on a wider school ethos of pupil SR support. A further limitation was that the authors did not appear to describe how they used action research as a methodology and did not attempt to make a thorough and/or systematic analysis of data.

The second AR study, a UK based EP collaborative intervention in four primary schools, was designed to support five Year 6 teachers in the development of their use of SF strategies when promoting pupil SR development (Simm & Ingram, 2008). The authors wished to contribute to an emerging body of practice-based evidence using SF techniques in primary schools. Simm & Ingram (2008) offered the schools a systemic intervention for SR pupil development following an action research design. The first AR cycle involved EPs and SENCos developing their use of SF techniques. The further AR cycles were related to the complex processes involved in transferring this learning to wider school systems. This including working with individuals, groups and classes. In addition to this SF approaches were utilised in writing and reviewing pupil Individual Education Plans as well as pupil peer support mechanisms. The authors noted that when utilising AR methodology it is beneficial to adopt a 'hand-ons' approach to

research (Simm & Ingram, 2008). This would allow for a more rigorous and accurate analysis rather than allowing the SF AR processes to be cascaded out systematically through the school systems. The focus of the intervention was for EPs to contribute to the emerging Primary National Strategy in developing teacher awareness of SF approaches when teaching children to become more aware of their own strengths and resources. The authors published a report mid-way through the two year study. The report highlighted anecdotal successes in aiding SENCos and teachers implementing SF classroom management strategies to encourage pupil ownership of SR change (Simm & Ingram, 2008). However no pupil comments were included in this anecdotal feedback. Simm and Ingram (2008) also stated that AR and SF approaches worked well when used together to generate practice-based evidence. They postulated that AR should evolve by learning from previous action research cycles. However they noted that this was difficult to operationalise due to funding issues and the external pressures of Ofsted inspection.

The third AR study by Vallaire-Thomas, Hicks and Growe (2011) was from the USA. The authors designed an AR proposal targeting SF intervention for 5 inner-city elementary and 5 rural middle school aged children with high discipline referral rates. The focus for this proposed intervention was for the researchers to train school staff and parents in SF techniques when aiding the childrens' SF development. This action research project was initially planned to continue over three school years. However teacher resistance to the programme presented as an obstacle to the project's action and fulfilment. The authors referred to the challenges of working within a school setting in terms of overcoming teacher resistance to changing well-established methods of behavioural management (Vallaire-Thomas et al, 2011). As result of these difficulties the results of this possibly too ambitious study were never published. Consequently there is limited transferability towards on-going solution-focused practices.

The fourth AR study, a recent University of East London UK doctoral study by Barton (2015) focused on developing SF techniques with children and young people with severe or moderate learning difficulties. The research was carried out in the context of the Children's and Families Bill, 2014 and related SEN Code of Practice, with emphasis on person-centred planning and the UK Gov-

ernment's initiative to improve opportunities for the use of psychological therapies (Barton, 2015). Ten young people attending specialist educational provision were assigned to the study who were between the ages of 12-18. SF techniques were evaluated in partnership with the participants and adapted through four action research cycles. Video recording was used for analysis of participant responses to the SF adaptations (Barton, 2015). The views of the participants were also recorded and evaluated and their feedback informed the development of Barton's SF practice when working with this population. Barton (2015) noted that her findings have the potential to inform EPs and related professionals working in this field. Barton (2015) emphasised the limitations of her research in that she did not examine the efficacy of using adapted solution-focused techniques with young people with severe or moderate learning difficulties. She also recognised that her SF adaptations may not be transferable for use with other young pupils or wider populations. Modifications to Barton's SF practice throughout her research included the use of a visual linear scale, simplifying numerical scale by replacing with smiley faces, lengthening time for pupil responses to questioning and a person-centred approach to visualising preferred futures. Barton (2015) noted that when working with pupils with severe learning difficulties there can be a lack of reality in response to researcher questions because these children have such strong desires to be accepted more than answer honestly.

2.3.7. Key learning from the four AR studies.

Key learning from the Burns and Hulusi (2005) AR was that pupil directed SR work is preferable than work decided by SF practitioners or by school staff or parents. Also the importance of the use of drama and role-play to enhance pupil participation in their understanding of their preferred futures when using the miracle question. Additionally the advantages of also involving the pupils' teachers in SF processes (Burns & Hulusi, 2005).

Key learning from the Simm and Ingram (2008) paper was that when conducting SF AR it was beneficial to adopt a methodological approach that allowed a more researcher directed analysis rather than allowing the SF AR processes to be distributed out and therefore somewhat distilled across the wider school sys-

tems. This research therefore validates the use of a one to one direct approach for SF AR in that the researcher was thereby able to be kept closer in touch with the SF learning taking place. Another key factor was that Simm and Ingram (2008) posited that AR and SF approaches worked well together.

The key learnings from Vallaire-Thomas et al (2011) are the importance of including parents in SF processes and, in the light of the fact that this project was not actioned, the possible dangers of being too ambitious in terms of research design and not working within resources and time constraints.

Finally Barton (2015) posited the key point that transferability was questionable when adopting a practice-based approach to research.

2.3.8. Critique of the literature review.

A necessary critique of the literature review is that 50% of the studies considered originated and were researched in the USA. The researcher is aware of the possible lack of transferability of this North American research into UK EP practice.

2.4. Other literature relevant to this study.

According to Stobie, Boyle & Woolfson (2005) SFBT research is in an embryonic stage and in need of development and expansion. This suggests the need for more EP focused research. Stobie et al (2005) asserted that consistent use of the six SFBT core components and triangulation of evidence from multi-method designs should be considered when conducting research in this area. The importance of practice-based evidence was also highlighted by Stobie et al (2005). They argued that the research base for evidenced based practice should be complemented and extended to include a variety of designs including qualitative research.

Rhodes and Ajmal (1995) postulated that SFBT offers a useful and flexible model when approaching young peoples' SR challenges in schools. In addition to this, a UK government document entitled 'Focusing on Solutions: A Positive

Approach to Improving Behaviour' (DfES, 2005) mentioned that a SF model, "encourages teachers, and others involved in developing effective approaches to behavioural issues, to adopt a positive stance in which energy is directed towards finding satisfactory ways forward rather than focusing on what is going wrong" (p.5). Further to this point, Miller (2003) stated that EPs have begun to utilise positive psychological SF behavioural approaches when working in a consultative capacity with schools. Finally, Amesu (2004) highlighted that SF language and questioning could be used to encourage young people to explore and problem-solve SR development and facilitate movement through stages of self-directed change set at their own pace.

After the exploration of relevant literature in the review in sections 2.3.4, 2.3.5, 2.3.6 and 2.3.7, seven of the studies utilised a one to one direct approach to support young people's SR development using SF techniques. Additional survey research conducted by Stobie et al (2005) reported that direct one to one individual work with children or young people represented the most frequent type of SF work used in UK EP practice. This demonstrated the importance of further professional practice development needed within this topic area.

Leggett (2009) noted that using SF methods with young clients can present a great challenge in terms of how to reach the current generation of young people's verbal and non verbal expression of thought, feelings and behaviours. Being flexible and creative with SFBT was also endorsed by de Shazer who proposed that practitioners should complement talking strategies by drawing from their own sources of creativity and experience (Leggett, 2009).

Finally, a UK Department of Education (DfE) research report by Woods, Bond, Humphrey and Symes (2011), highlighted the importance of considering the effectiveness and the possible safeguarding criteria use of SFBT with young people and their families. The report pointed to the fact that SFBT processes are more applicable for use with short-term practitioners as have been used in this doctoral research (Woods et al, 2011). Therefore this research would not be necessarily transferrable to more longer term SFBT AR cycles which may involve interaction with pupils and parents with possible child protection issues.

2.5. *The relevance of this action research project for Educational Psychologists.*

This solution-focused action research project has the potential to offer useful insights relevant to EP work in relation to Year 6 and 7 students' self-regulation. Although the central focus of this project was to develop the researcher's solution-focused practice, the findings and learning resulting from it may also be beneficial to other EPs seeking to enhance their own solution-focused practice. This view is somewhat mirrored by Simm and Ingram (2008) who noted the efficacy of EPs engaging in solution-focused action research in terms of embedding the use of these approaches in their professional educational work.

Fox (2011) posits that it is critical for EPs to strengthen their own evidence base through the process of developing their practice-based knowledge. This points to the further relevance of this researcher's action research project in terms of sharing any personal learning and practice development with other EPs. Fox (2003) also postulates that individual EPs should systematically study their own ways of working through the rigorous process of self-reflection and appraisal. This proposal further highlights the relevance of this AR work in terms of providing other EPs an example of how practice-based development could be achieved.

The Woods et al (2011) UK Department of Education (DfE) research document noted in the previous section 2.4, also reported that further SFBT research with young people is needed to offer insights related to the utility of using SFBT techniques to support a variety of SR challenges. Woods et al (2011) pointed to the need for further SFBT research in the areas of young peoples' behavioural difficulties as well as to support improvements in functional skills at school. These researchers offer additional evidence related to the researcher's solution-focused AR project and its possible relevance to the wider research community.

2.6. *Summary of literature review.*

This chapter provided an overview of the philosophical background as well as the six core components of SFBT. The systematic literature review evaluated previous SF research related to young peoples' SR development. The review provided some initial insights into SF practice development. The studies evaluated appear to provide an evidence base supporting the efficacy of utilising SF techniques for the development of Year 6 and 7 pupils' SR. Literature evaluation also revealed that there is limited research into the area of EP professional practice development related to the modification of SF techniques.

This research aims to explore and develop the researcher's professional SF practice when working with young peoples' SR development. In doing so he intends to add to the limited body of previous practice-based evidence in this domain. To reiterate, the research question under investigation is set out as follows:

How can I use first person action research to develop solution-focused practice in collaboration with Year 6 and 7 pupils when discussing their behavioural self-regulation at school?

Chapter 3. Methodology.

3.1. Introduction to chapter.

This chapter will begin with a brief discussion of the importance of practice-based evidence in Educational Psychology. It will outline details of the action research methodology and data collection procedures. The researcher's philosophical position will then be delineated. This will be followed by details of the Thematic Analysis used to analyse data. Details of the participants and methods of recruitment will also be considered. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations.

3.2. Practice-based evidence.

The research question, How can I use first person action research to develop solution-focused practice in collaboration with Year 6 and 7 pupils when discussing their behavioural self-regulation at school?, aligns with the *modus operandi* of practice-based evidence. According to Fox (2011) practitioner research has become a useful method of examining professional practice and developing expertise. Fox (2011) notes that EPs often use a range of psychological problem-solving models to frame common problems. These may utilise Behavioural, Systemic, Cognitive Behavioural and Psychodynamic theories. According to Stobie et al (2005) UK EPs have reported positively about using solution-focused approaches in their work alongside the well-established problem-solving models.

The researcher chose a solution-focused framework as the theoretical rationale for intervention to develop Year 6 and 7 pupils' SR. The emphasis was to encourage the Year 6 and 7 pupils to view their 'worlds' from a SF perspective. A SF approach offers a positive psychological path to SR development (Rhodes & Ajmal, 1995). The researcher didn't choose to focus on the causes of the pupils' SR challenges from a within-child problem focused perspective. A SF approach can support pupils to make positive SR changes. Indeed, according to Rhodes and Ajmal (1995) SF methods offer a useful and flexible approach emphasising the strengths and resources of students. Rhodes and Ajmal (1995) also note

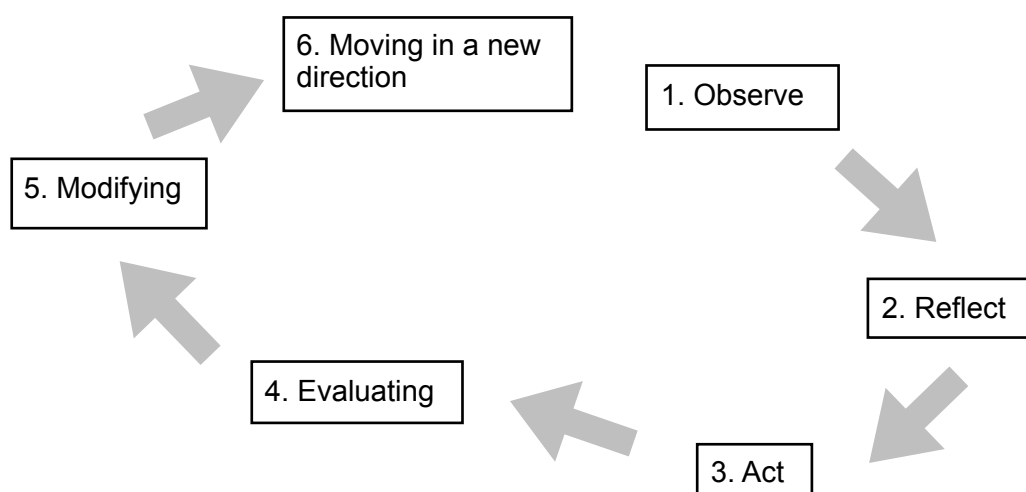
that the goals of the individual pupil has to be central in order for a SF approach to be successful.

3.3. Research design.

The literature review highlighted limited EP practice-based research in the area of developing SF practice using AR. For this reason it was necessary to utilise an exploratory research design. There was a need for a fluid methodology that allowed for a degree of flexibility to account for changes and adaptations to the AR cycles. Simm and Ingram (2008) posited that AR and SF approaches complement each other and work together effectively. AR allows the practitioner/researcher to explore and critique their work (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). It allows space for professional practitioners to study their own practice and view themselves as the context and main *foci* of their studies. The AR design aimed to incorporate a qualitative approach using Thematic Analysis (TA). TA was used to evaluate participant feedback and inform the modification of the researcher's SF practice.

AR typically follows a cyclical process which is known as an Action-Reflection Cycle (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011, p10). The cycle is made up of a number of phases which include; observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating, modifying and the possible movement in new and improved directions (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Action-Reflection cycle adapted from McNiff and Whitehead (2011).



This cyclical model was followed throughout the research. The details of how this process was actioned by the researcher is explained in further detail in section 4.5.

3.4. *Philosophical position / research paradigm.*

3.4.1. *Ontology.*

Central to the research design was the idea of listening to and learning from young peoples' experiences and views of SF intervention by the researcher with the aim of improving SF practice. For parts of this chapter the researcher will refer to himself from a first person perspective. The reasons for this change will be explained in epistemological section 3.4.2.

My ontology was the specific need to improve SF practice. It was not the intention to take up a spectator approach but rather to undertake enquiries with others involved in the research in order to create 'living theories' of practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Utilising an AR methodology offered the opportunity to work co-operatively with the young people who joined me on my research journey. Interview feedback from the participants was used to evaluate and develop my own SF practice. AR seeks to promote participant power and encourages a research partnership towards building better ways of working (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

AR became therefore a 'living theory' grounded in the ontological 'I' (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). I envisaged myself as operating in a way that was consistent with my values. These values remained firmly rooted in the importance of developing empathetic and balanced relational practices with the participants involved in this research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

3.4.2. *Epistemology.*

Before training to become an EP I supported young people with SR challenges when working as a primary school teacher and, subsequently, as a values-education workshop facilitator. When working in this capacity it was apparent how school staff did not always possess the necessary skills to support individual

young peoples' SR development or would not have had the time to work with them in a classroom context.

As an action researcher I aimed to develop my SF professional practice and critique and modify established methods of working with young people. I set out to place myself at the centre of the research in order to attempt to become a 'knowledge-creator' as part of professional EP training (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). The decision to deliberately write portions of my thesis from a first person perspective somewhat reflected this position as a 'practice-based' researcher. I reconciled that writing from an 'I' perspective where the object of enquiry was myself and not other people and using a first person narrative. This provided a stronger sense of authenticity to this chapter of my write-up. McNiff and Whitehead (2011) add further clarification and support for this choice. They note,

Perhaps the main 'do' is to write in the first person; to use 'I' with conviction and celebrate your capacity and to write high quality texts that will withstand the most rigorous critique. Previously the use of 'I' was avoided; today, in action research and most case study research, the use of 'I' is expected. This is your research, and your original claim to knowledge, so go ahead and celebrate it with honour and panache (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011, p. 118).

Self-study AR involves the practitioner/researcher constructing and developing explanations and theories for what they are doing. In this context a theory is about what 'I' am doing and therefore the theories can be explained as taking on a living form (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Over time these personalised theories became increasingly connected to my experiences and professional SF practice. To reiterate, the epistemology of the design was guided by the fact that the object of the enquiry was the development of my own SF practice. First person AR does not look to study other people but rather focuses on personal accountability in order to improve practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). My epistemology reflects the idea that the researcher's SF practice development with Year 6 and 7 pupils is both a dissonant and collaborative process. When designing this study the rationale related to the need to be empathetic and respect-

ful to the Year 6 and 7 pupil participants. I attempted to give them the space and opportunity to critique my SF practice during the interviews.

3.4.3. *Theoretical position.*

The research position aligned itself with critical-realism. A critical-realist philosophical stance posits that there is a shared reality or truth and that views of this reality are dependent on the individual and their constructions of truth. A critical-realist view refers to the importance of understanding a situation before it can be changed (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Further to this point power relationships are also analysed and considered.

This research assumes the belief that young people present with SR challenges within a broad spectrum of need. It also assumes that SF techniques are also valid and useful tools for helping young people develop their own SR.

When conducting my research I became aware of how my own personal knowledge and values impacted on interactions with the participants. This interaction is known as axiology, and is influenced by the philosophical paradigm that the researcher adopted (Mathews, 2003). Taking up a critical-realist position created awareness of how my values and knowledge impacted on research interactions as well as the need to be reflexive in terms of power and how my position as a researcher should be acknowledged and managed. For this reason a research diary was utilised. This diary tool will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Other important assumptions built into my research philosophical design were McNiff and Whitehead's (2011) ideas that:

- Knowledge creation is an uncertain and subjective enterprise
- Answers to questions should be sought through negotiation with others
- Knowledge is the property of individuals and is thus biased and subjective.

3.5. Further information related to the theory and evidence base for using action research as a methodological tool.

Methodologies refer to the way in which research is undertaken (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). The methodology of AR was initially developed from the theoretical assumptions of critical-realism (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). According to McNiff (2010) AR was then further developed by educational academics as a research methodology to evaluate the processes of professional practice. This development of AR was connected to the idea that accountability and self-critique are essential features of sound practice.

AR was also formulated using ideas connected to person-centred theory (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). According to these action researchers person-centred theory relates specifically to an individual's potential to understand and develop their own skills and capacities. A further assumption of AR is the idea that practitioners should be viewed as competent professionals who have the necessary skills to act as agents of their own personal change utilising AR methodologies (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). McNiff and Whitehead were influenced by Sen's (1999) seminal work, 'Development of Freedom'. Sen (1999) postulated that the achievement of self development is dependent on an individual's freedom to actualise personal growth.

AR evolved even further to incorporate a 'living-form' of theory where researchers need to take action to understand what is happening to themselves in the context of their professional lives or during research (Whitehead, 2014). 'Living theory' action research provides a methodological tool that allows practitioners to create their own evidence based explanations to extend and improve their professional learning. Further to this, McNiff posits that a strength of AR is "that it begins in practice, and people generate their own theories out of their practice" (2010, p25).

The evidence base of AR as a methodological tool is gaining momentum in the UK as well as worldwide (Whitehead, 2012). Some examples of this evidence base include: Pott's (2012) AR project to develop pedagogy for citizenship education in the UK and in South Africa; Huxtable (2012), a UK based senior edu-

cational psychologist, undertook an AR study to enhance her inclusive practice related to young peoples' abilities to learn to live loving, satisfying and productive lives for themselves and for others; Kinsella's (2012) 'living' educational inquiry researched the development of online pedagogical practices in order to help students successfully negotiate learning barriers posed by online technologies; and finally, Crotty's (2012) Dublin City University AR self-study focused on bringing an entrepreneurial ethos into higher education practices. These above mentioned action researchers attempted to accept responsibility for developing their learning in professional contexts through engaging in enquiries related to the improvement of their practice (Whitehead, 2012).

3.6. Data collection and analysis procedures.

Two AR cycles were actioned in the spring and summer school terms in 2015. Each cycle offered the chance to modify SF practice using an in-depth Thematic Analysis approach before engaging in a new cycle with these modifications built into the next cycle. The cycles followed the action-reflection process of observation, reflection, action, evaluation and modification (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). This action plan constituted a set of prompts rather than a series of fixed steps. These were flexible and open to adaptation in the contexts of facilitating SF intervention and within the boundaries of each of the two school systems.

To complement the two main AR cycles SF practice was also developed using a series of subsidiary learning phases. This process included both the planning and modifying of the individual weekly sessions after their completion and in-between SF sessions.

Developing SF practice from my Year 1 training experiences began with a UEL based SF workshop in Year 2 of the Trainee EP programme. This involved a live demonstration where a SF practitioner specialist used SF principles in collaboration with a member of the year group cohort. During this session the SF practitioner specialist utilised 'signature questions' to help facilitate a mock client exchange. These questions created the platform to listen to the trainee's story in order to generate key ideas and responses related to a specific goal. This was ultimately achieved through note taking, active listening and feeding back ver-

batim responses. The process provided space for reflective thinking and consideration of alternate meanings and ultimately guided the trainee toward solutions and the next steps towards actioning their goals. Throughout the UEL session these key skills were practiced by all second year trainee EPs and provided useful ideas for the planning of SF sessions with cycle 1 participants as part of this AR project.

In addition to this learning, the planning phase used before each session involved utilising and learning from the UEL SF Handbook (Thomas, 2014). The use of this UEL handbook developed as the sessions continued and it became a valuable tool for modifying and augmenting SF practice in-between weekly sessions. For example, referring to the point that the miracle question has four parts (BRIEF, 2016):

- The miracle happens
- The miracle resolves the problem (s) or realises the goal (s)
- The person is asleep so doesn't know
- The discovery is made step by step.

The researcher's reflections and study of the SF textbook '*Putting Difference to Work*' by Steve de Shazer (1991) complemented learning within the subsidiary phases of the AR design. One early example of how I utilised Steve de Shazer's considerable SF expertise was the analysis of how he framed '*The Concept of Problem Exception*'. De Shazer (1991) noted the importance of focusing on exceptions not problems. This enables the reframing of the client's position to be that of an expert in their own lives. This SF assumption became central to my SF practice development.

Individual supervision sessions via EPS placement and at UEL with my Director of Studies also assisted reflection and supplemented the development of my SF practice. For example the linking of my SF learning to other aspects of EP practice such as SF consultation skill development with schools and parents as part of day to day casework. Also direct work with children and young people. Further examples of learning from this process will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.6.1. Overall summary of procedure for AR cycles.

1. Informed consent gained from initial meetings with head teacher, parent/carer and pupil.
2. Commencement of SF intervention with participants. Three SF sessions per child on site at both schools (approximately 35 minutes per individual session).
3. Subsidiary SF learning carried out in-between sessions. See section 3.6.2 below for further details.
4. Individual interviews with the four participants to collect feedback data after third SF session.
5. Thematic Analysis of interview data.
6. Feedback to all children from the researcher in a letter format (See Appendix J). This included confidential details of individual SF sessions and as well as the researcher's appreciation of pupil feedback. As part of the agreement with the young people and their parents these letters are not included in this write-up document. It was explained to the participants that it would be their decision who they shared this letter with.
7. Researcher's evaluation and modification of SF practice based on pupil feedback carried out and was built into the next AR cycle.

3.6.2. Brief summary of subsidiary phases in-between each of the three SF sessions with pupils.

1. Plan first SF session.
2. Undertake first individual session with all four participants separately.
3. Reflect on each of the four sessions after completion.
4. Plan next session modifying SF approach based on: my own reflections; SF reading and discussions with both university and EP placement supervisors. Continue this process for next two sessions.

3.6.3. Qualitative data collection and Thematic Analysis.

3.6.3.1. The interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were used with each individual participant after their third SF session. Interviews were used to gather the views of the participants' experiences of SF intervention in order for it to be developed using their ideas and feedback. The interviews were audio tape recorded and transcribed as part of the Thematic Analysis process.

The qualitative nature of this data gathering reflected the individual differences of the participants in the following ways; the questions or prompts asked by the researcher allowed space for answers to lead on to other possible relevant questions unique to the interviewee and situation; the length of each interview varied and the interview primarily relied on the use of open questions. In addition to this the interview process was another opportunity to develop my SF techniques such as questioning and prompting. Further details of this shall be discussed in chapter 4.

Interview data gathered at the evaluation stage in cycle 1 and cycle 2 was analysed using TA. The findings from this will be outlined in chapter 4.

3.6.3.2. *Details of Thematic Analysis.*

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) TA is a way of identifying, reporting and analysing complex data into themes. A theme should capture something important within the data in relation to the research question.

This researcher utilised a 'top-down' or theoretical approach to Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis was undertaken by the researcher in order to answer the research question. A critique offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) posited that this form of TA can provide a less rich description of the overall data, but a more detailed analysis of the research question under investigation. My aim was to move beyond a purely semantic analysis of the childrens' responses towards a more interpretative or latent approach. In other words the themes that emerged from the data were first acknowledged and then

interpreted by myself in order to inform ongoing my SF practice. Six steps of TA advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) were utilised. These included:

Step 1. The premise of this step was to become familiar with the interview data collected. Braun and Clarke (2006) referred to the importance of the researcher 'immersing themselves' in order to become thoroughly familiar with the details of its content. This involved a rigorous study of the data including the consideration of initial ideas related to the research question. The transcription process was an efficient method of this initial familiarisation. Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that there is no one way of carrying out TA or specific guidelines for transcription. I transcribed verbatim all verbal responses from the audio recorded interview data. This was enacted in order to maintain the accuracy of the pupils' use of language with its possible philosophical implications. The verbatim transcription is also used to honour and positively attempt to embrace the pupils' linguistic style and manner of communication within the interviews.

Step 2. Initial codes emerged after familiarisation with the data. This phase involved the generation of initial codes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) latent codes identify elements of data of interest to the researcher, and shed light on the research question under investigation. Coding organised data into meaningful groups prior to theme generation. Coding procedures were interpretive or research question-driven rather than purely data driven on the semantic level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Details of this process are unpacked in further detail in chapter 4. Coding analysis involved using highlighters, coloured pens and 'post-it' notes to indicate potential patterns (codes) within segments of the data.

Step 3. This involved searching for general themes. Further to this point, Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasised the need to re-focus the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes. The researcher considered how the codes could combine to form an general theme. Mind-maps were used to provide a visual representation or thematic map of each theme topic area. Step 3 ended with a group of candidate themes and sub-themes.

Step 4. This phase involved two levels of reviewing and refining both the candidate and sub-themes. Level one consisted of reviewing at the level of the coded

data extracts. The overall aim here was to produce a candidate thematic map. Chapter 4 will provide a visual representation of these candidate thematic maps. Level two considered the validity of my individual themes in relation to the entire data set. Braun and Clarke (2006) mention that “the need for re-coding from the data set is to be expected as coding is an ongoing organic process” (p21). This phase ended when the themes generated offered insights impacting on my SF practice development.

Step 5. Defining and naming the themes using a thematic map was the next phase. Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that this phase should “identify the essence of what each theme is about and what is interesting about them and why?” (p22). Other aspects of this phase included identifying the explicit narrative of each theme to ensure limited overlap between themes and sub-theme generation. Braun & Clarke (2006) note that themes should be clearly definable. A test used for this was to see whether or not the researcher could describe the range and content of each theme in no more than two sentences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). If not possible, further theme refinement was required. The final thematic map as well as a series of two sentence descriptions of each theme can be viewed in Chapter 4.

Step 6. This step involved the final analysis and write-up of the data analysis presented in Chapter 4. The aim of this write-up was to provide a concise and coherent overall account of the processes involved.

Two separate Thematic Analyses were undertaken. The first used data from four participants collected at the end of cycle 1. The second used data collected at the end of cycle 2. Chapter 4 will outline the findings from both cycles.

3.6.4. *School and participant selection criteria.*

Participants were recruited from two schools. Four from a primary school (Year 6) and four from a secondary school (Year 7). The Church of England primary school was co-educational. The secondary was a Catholic High school for girls. The researcher had been the Local Authority trainee Educational Psychologist for both schools from the beginning of the 2014/15 academic year.

In terms of the type of participants recruited, the researcher carefully considered the theoretical and conceptual framework of Year 6 and 7 pupils experiencing self-regulation challenges as well as acknowledging the recent SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) category of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). Any discussions with school SENCos and Head Teachers aimed at recruiting participants within this broad category of need. Therefore the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to select participants for this research included the following two variables:

1. Age. Typically SF methods are not used with young children (Franklin et al, 2001). The researcher decided to exclude all participants under the age of 11 years old and included participants between the ages of 11 and 12. This included pupils from both Year 6 and 7 and reflected the researcher's interest in developing SF practice within this age group. This interest was initially formed during the researcher's first year of EP training as mentioned in section 1.4.
2. The SEMH needs of the pupils. The inclusion/exclusion criteria required the selection of pupils presenting with social and emotional needs and not mental health difficulties. The researcher asked the two school SENCos to locate students whose SR needs matched the Department of Education definition of SEMH to include pupils with, "social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many different ways. These include becoming withdrawn...as well as displaying challenging, disruptive behaviour" (DfE and DoH, 2015, p98). The four primary school participants recruited presented with challenging and disruptive behaviours related to poor concentration and aggressive behaviours. The four secondary students recruited presented with challenging behaviours related to concentration issues, internal exclusion and withdrawn behaviours. As noted earlier in section 1.2.2 the selection criteria included participants who were not on the schools' SEN register but who were currently being considered for this by school staff. Therefore participant inclusion in this research was considered a proactive response to the eight pupils' SR challenges at school.

3.6.5. Recruitment procedure summary.

1. Consent and approval was given by both the school's head teachers. This was achieved through meeting with them and discussing the details of the AR research Information Sheet and consent form (see Appendix B).
2. Discussion with SENCOs in both schools to identify possible participants and discuss ethical details and risk assessment procedures.
3. Meetings with pupils and their parents to discuss details of the SF intervention and data collection procedures. Information Sheets and consent forms (see Appendix C) were presented and explained to both parents and pupils in order to make sure all details of the study were fully understood and communicated before informed consent was asked for.
4. Further details of the SF intervention as well as the understanding that the pupils were free to leave the research at any time was reiterated at the beginning of each individual SF session.

3.6.6. Sampling methods.

The study incorporated purposive-sampling. According to Robson (2011) a purposive sample is based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. The participants that were selected were experiencing challenges with self-regulation within their school environment.

3.6.7. Consideration of validity and reliability issues.

A vital element of any research design is a consideration of its epistemological and methodological validity (Mays and Pope, 2005). This process involves an assessment of the researcher's chosen methodology against criteria such as validity and relevance. The researcher maximised validity through the triangulation of data sources using Thematic Analysis. This occurred both within each child's data and across all participants' data and therefore incorporated a reflexive evaluation of data (Mays and Pope, 2005).

The aim was to demonstrate that my values related to ideas of freedom of expression, equality and pupil participation. Critical-friends were utilised in order to

further strengthen the validity of data analysis. Details of this will be given during Chapter 4.

My research will not make generalisations about the effectiveness of SF approaches on childrens' self-regulation.

The qualitative criteria for judging trustworthiness within this design considered the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the data collection methods (Mertens, 2010). Credibility was adhered to by the use of age appropriate and co-constructed methods of data collection. The procedures of the SF intervention should be transferable to other contexts but there was no intention of doing this within this research design. A research diary was kept to record relevant issues arising affecting dependability. I also made use of confirmability strategies to attempt to limit the effects of my researcher bias and distortion. This involved an audit-type analysis where critical-friends checked the procedures used and looked for negative instances that may first invalidate but ultimately potentially strengthen the TA. This provided what McNiff & Whitehead (2011) described as construct-validity where the researcher utilised multiple methods of confirming that my own constructs were not imposed on the data being collected.

Further evidence demonstrating validity within this design was considered as recommended by McNiff & Whitehead (2011). This included the use of catalytic validity showing evidence that the participants moved towards new, more productive positions. Ironical validity was also used to demonstrate that the qualitative interview process and rigorous TA provided an investigation of the underlying assumptions behind the participants' experiences (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Finally rhizomatic validity was used to highlight the interconnected nature of human enquiry with an emphasis on the multiple directions of influence that the study may have had on the pupils, researcher and wider systems (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

3.7. *Ethical considerations.*

When planning and undertaking this research the 'Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics' (Health and Care Professionals Council, 2008) and the British Psychological Society 'Code of Ethics and Conduct' (BPS, 2009) were adhered to. Information Sheets and consent forms presented to schools, parents/carers and pupils were all approved by the UEL Ethics Board (see Appendix D). I operated in an ethical manner with the young people, their families and the schools.

The participants for this study were viewed by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 1993 & 2010) as a vulnerable group when considering the issue of informed consent as they were under the age of sixteen. It was therefore crucial to obtain freely volunteered informed consent before any pupils were referred to the research. Consent letters were read to the participants before they took part and on two further occasions. Any technical vocabulary was explained and time for questions and answers was given. Role-play was used to illustrate the concept that the children were free to leave the study at any time to make sure that this important point was fully communicated by myself. Any clarification of details were carefully discussed using the parents/carers or pupils Information Sheets and my contact details were also provided.

The SF intervention utilised with participants was based on the therapeutic methods of Solution Focused Brief Therapy. However the researcher did not label the intervention as a programme of therapeutic delivery.

The confidentiality and anonymity parameters for the study were made explicit to all involved before consent was gained. This included a consideration of potential child protection disclosures and situations where confidentiality might need to be broken. This was explained to the participants carefully. It was made clear that the researcher was responsible for taking the necessary steps to protect the young person if, during the intervention, information was disclosed that indicated a young person was 'at risk of significant harm' (BPS, 2010). Procedures for this were discussed with the school SENCOs and parents/carers before commencement of the study.

Discussion of the location for the study took place making sure that both the pupils and the researcher were not isolated and 'out of view' of other adults in the school. Anonymity was obtained through not naming the schools that were part of the study. Further details of data protection issues can be read in the Information Sheets in Appendix B and C.

3.8. *Summary of methodology.*

The methodological aims for this design were to develop my SF practice. Eight participants were recruited from two schools using purposive sampling for Year 6 and 7 pupils' SR development.

The exploratory research design utilised a fluid AR methodology that allowed a degree of flexibility. The use of AR aimed to incorporate a qualitative approach utilising:

1. A series of subsidiary learning phases in-between sessions as described above.
2. Thematic Analyses of data from both the AR cycles 1 and 2.

The ontology included the concept of improving SF practice grounded in the ontological 'I' (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). I attempted to conduct the research in a way that was consistent with my values. These values were and are rooted in the importance of developing empathetic and balanced relational practices with others involved in research.

The epistemological position was determined and guided by the fact that the object of the enquiry was myself. First-person action research does not look to study other people but rather focuses on personal accountability in order to improve professional practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). The research aligned with a critical-realist theoretical position.

The potential impact of my research beyond the context of the two cycles of AR was also considered. This involved an analysis of the further possible utility of the research findings beyond the remit of this study. This could include: offering feedback to other professionals; the development of the researcher's general

EP practice; offering schools SF 'Inset training' within this topic area; giving children and parents feedback via the pupil letter described above; providing useful feedback to others TEPs when presenting the research findings at UEL in Year 3 and making the research thesis available to other interested professional SF practitioners.

Chapter 4 will explore the findings derived from this process.

Chapter 4. The Action Research Process and Findings.

4.1. Introduction.

This chapter will provide a detailed audit-trail account of the AR process that the researcher undertook to develop his professional practice using SF techniques. This will include a step by step account of the 2 cycles of Thematic Analysis actioned. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the main findings derived from this AR project.

4.2. Action research cycle 1.

Aims of cycle 1.

The researcher transcribed auditory data *verbatim* (pupil verbal responses only, not including non-verbal communication) and has included pertinent extracts to evidence the main findings from cycle 1. This will be outlined in section 4.2.2. below with the overall aim of answering the research question:

How can I use first person AR to develop SF practice in collaboration with Year 6 and 7 pupils when discussing their behavioural SR at school?

Prior to the interviews with the participants, the researcher met with each YP three times for approximately 35 minutes over a period of three weeks. The SF intervention sessions with each participant will continue to be known as the subsidiary phase of the overall AR process. The findings from the first subsidiary phase in cycle 1 will be reported in the next section.

4.2.1. Cycle 1 subsidiary learning phase.

Initial learning in-between participant SF sessions included study of the UEL Solution Oriented Thinking and SFBT Handbook (Thomas, 2014). This involved embedding into the researcher's practice the basic philosophical premises of solution-oriented thinking as outlined by the European Brief Therapy Association EBTA (2012) 'Solution Focused Practice Definitions'. These philosophical premises included the idea of working with the young peoples' skills, knowledge, strengths and not their problems. Also looking for resources rather than

deficits and the exploration of pupils' self-directed preferred futures as well as viewing the participants as experts in their lives.

Subsidiary phase learning also included the ongoing reading of Steve de Shazer's seminal book 'Putting Difference to Work' (1991). De Shazer (1991) noted that both clinical experience and research indicated that use of "interactional and situational goal statements that describe the 'who?, what?, when?, where? and how?' of a solution are more desirable than single-targeted behavioural goal statements" (p.112). This statement from de Shazer (1991) emphasised the importance of encouraging SF clients to locate workable and realistic goals. Therefore participant goal setting as part of this AR study should be specific, concrete and achievable. De Shazer (1991) also mentioned the importance of client hard-work and the co-constructive relationship between the client and the professional SF practitioner.

During the act of facilitating, reflecting, evaluating and modifying each SF session, the researcher became aware of how his own knowledge and values impacted on his interactions with the participants. This is known as an axiological reflection where the researcher considered his own ethical philosophical position (Mathews, 2003). This included the need to be reflexive of himself and his position and the possible power imbalances between the researcher and the Year 6 and 7 pupils. The researcher completed a diary which allowed for some initial modifications to SF practice including new paths of action. These actions were related to the ongoing axiological reflections. A research diary entry example can be viewed in Appendix E. Within this diary entry one focus of SF adaptation was the need to be reflexive of the power differential that the researcher noticed during the first two SF sessions with Year 6 participants. These differentials were reflected on and modified by the researcher when engaging in resource activation and how best to use the break for reflection. He also reflected on how to attempt to eliminate inadvertently imposing his way of reflecting on the participants. Body language was considered. Gerald Egan's SOLAR principle (Egan, 1990) had relevance to this task. This included Egan's modifications to the researcher's body language such as **sitting** attentively; emphasising an **open** posture; **leaning** forward; establishing **eye** contact and adopting **relaxed** body language with the participants.

Further learning was activated by the request of the participants and included the researcher asking school staff permission to access materials such as footballs, games as well as the freedom to conduct sessions in a variety of settings. This strategy was used for the purpose of supporting the young person explore their goal setting in a possibly more relaxed and child-centred way.

Another aspect of SF practice development was supervision with a UEL academic tutor. For example, working on the need to promote participant empowerment and equality in client-directed and more empathetic ways. The researcher learnt that it was both positive and helpful to discuss with the participants his own challenges with SR development in order to build stronger empathetic relations for both researcher and pupil. Additionally there was the need to discuss more honestly with participants about any natural confusion and doubts that might exist related to the challenging task of SR development.

As noted in section 2.2. each SF session was carried out as part of the first AR cycle followed the pattern of SFBT delivery as outlined by de Shazer and Berg (1997). This included:

- 1: Resource activation
- 2: Goal setting including preferred future questioning e.g. miracle question to imagine a preferred future
- 3: Exploring exceptions to problems
- 4: Scaling to prioritise goals and measure progress
- 5: Break for reflection
- 6: Agreement of next steps.

After attending three SF sessions the participants were given a letter outlining their apparent successes according to the researcher's point of view as well as his gratitude to each of them for taking part in the study. An example of this letter can be viewed in Appendix J. Interviews took place directly after the pupils' third SF session.

4.2.2. Cycle 1 interview data collection and first Thematic Analysis (TA).

TA was utilised as a method to rigorously explore how the researcher's SF practice could be developed using the ideas and feedback gathered from the the four cycle 1 participants' interview data.

As discussed in section 3.6.3.2, on page 40, a TA approach was used to condense the interview data collected into usable new approaches for SF practice modification. The systematic approach of Braun and Clarke (2006) and the six steps described in section 3.6.3.2 were followed. The overall aim of using TA was to interpret the data set in order to effectively answer the research question.

4.2.2.1. Step 1: Becoming familiar with cycle 1 data.

The TA process began with the researcher transcribing each of the four pupils audio recorded interviews. The overall word count for cycle 1 participant transcribed data was 8020. During this stage pseudonym names were adopted for each cycle 1 participant. All four pupils shall be known from now on as:

- 2 x Year 6 boys - Mathew and Keith
- 2 x Year 7 girls - Amy and Margie

The transcription process was recorded *verbatim* with references to noticeable periods of pausing and sustained silence. The extract below represents an example of the first page of Year 7 pupil Margie's transcript. Margie's full transcript can be viewed in Appendix F. Transcripts for the other cycle 1 participants can be found on the CD-ROM attached to this thesis document.

Extract from transcript of qualitative interview with Margie (Year 7). 34 mins 12 sec. I = Interviewer P = Interviewee

1. I: ...can you tell me what you think about the sessions we've had?
2. P: They were good. Pause...
3. I: What did you enjoy?
4. P: Talking. Yes I enjoyed talking. Because it helped me improve my French learning. As this was my target.
5. I: Anything else?

6. P: Well I enjoy generally talking about everything, it's a good way to communicate to people around here. I like talking with my friends. During the sessions I've enjoyed talking to you and finding out about interesting things. Which is good.
7. I: Anything else?
8. P: Like I said they were good, like funny actually. You make jokes. Which made it easy to talk. It's not like a boring lesson, and when the teachers keep blabbing on and on.
9. I: So you like when things are funny? What is it about jokes that you like?
- 10.P: It makes me relax and talk more so it's not so tense. That's just what I like.
- 11.I: Um, so it's not too serious?
- 12.P: Yeah that's it. Good.
- 13.I: Did you enjoy anything about the sessions?
- 14.P: Um, Yes I did. Can't really think about what I enjoyed. That's difficult. So much. If I was to say what I enjoyed most it would be the perfect picture thing. What's it called?
- 15.I: Your preferred picture. Talk about that if you wouldn't mind?
- 16.P: ...I thought about what I wanted to improve like in French which was my area I decided to tackle. Thinking about it using the 'preferred picture' helped me set a goal that was different than just getting my grade target. It helped me get more involved in French than I used to be. I do get more involved and listen to the teacher. Well now I don't talk when my teacher does and ask my friends to stop talking to me. I don't write secret messages on paper to my friends, well I do, but not so much. All this was possible because I thought about my preferred picture. I mean my preferred picture is not to never talk or never write messages...I don't see that as a problem. My teachers do. Ha.

4.2.2.2. Step 2: Generating initial codes.

This step included working back through each line of the transcripts to determine the initial codes and their descriptions. An extract from Margie's code-book can be seen below in Figure 2. Margie's complete code-book can be viewed in Appendix G. The code-books for the other three cycle 1 participants can be accessed via the attached CD-ROM. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), codes should identify elements of data that are interesting to the researcher in terms of shedding light on the research question under investigation. The data was organised into meaningful groups in preparation for initial theme generation. The overall aim of the coding process was to use the data interpretively to modify the researcher's SF practice, rather than it being a purely semantic process. Annotations were added to the data segments throughout the coding process as frequently occurring patterns and ideas took shape (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2. Extract from Margie's code-book.

X Chinese tra ✓

Transcript of qualitative Interview with Ma (Year 7). 34 mins 12 sec

Empowering - Creating a space where imperfection is OK.

Demanding style

Positive instructional style

Ordinary talk.

Recognition of informality

No pressure

Repetition of empowerment

Protecting own space.

x 4 of 2.

initial positive (general) reactions

Ownership of Target (first mention) (- Her referring to it)

Enjoys talking & talking to

Likes her friends

open questions... enough?

Negative reaction to teachers' style.

Jokes - Humour promotes talk.

contrast with lesson, at school.

Jokes - release tension.

Direct questioning

Types of questioning - culture - listening

making specific

Goals are important

courteous questioning (tact) indirect

Thinking about own behaviour

Preferred picture as Catalyst.

moving from externalised goals to internalised goals

movement from closed to open questions → reveals more of herself

21. I: Anything else?

22. P: Um, no that's it.

23. I: Did you enjoy anything about the sessions?

24. P: Um, Yes I did. Can't really think about what I enjoyed. That's difficult. So much. If I was to say what I enjoyed most it would be the perfect picture thing. What's it called?

25. I: Your preferred picture. Talk about that if you wouldn't mind?

26. P: Yes that's it called. Well, I thought about what I what to improve like in French which was my area I decided to tackle. Thinking about it using the 'preferred picture' helped me set a goal that was different than just getting my grade target. It helped me get more involved in French than I used to be. I do get more involved and listen to the teacher. Well now I don't talk when my teacher does and ask my friends to stop talking to me. I don't write secret messages on paper to my friends, well I do, but not so much. All this was possible because I thought about my preferred picture. I mean my preferred picture is not to never talk or never write messages because I don't see that as a problem. My teachers do. Ha.

27. P: OK well thanks for sharing that Ma.

Figure 2 highlighted the procedure opted for in terms of transforming one the participant's interview data into codes in line with the TA process set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was used for all cycle 1 pupils. Partici-

pant data was analysed and coded for aspects of SF practice that could be developed using the feedback the young people offered (see Table 4).

Table 4. Codes developed from Margie's interview data.

Extract	Transcript extract content	Coding and re-coding
16	Like I said they were good, like funny actually. You make jokes. Which made it easy to talk. It's not like a boring lesson, and when the teachers keep blabbing on and on.	Jokes and humour promote talk and reduce stress. Re-coded=Active listening.
26	Thinking about it using the 'preferred picture' helped me set a goal that was different than just getting my grade target...Well now I don't talk when my teacher does and ask my friends to stop talking to me. I don't write secret messages on paper to my friends. All this was possible because I thought about my preferred picture.	Preferred picture as Catalyst. Re-coded=Use of friends to support goals.
31	Yeah that's it. I enjoyed that. Although at first I thought you were talking about dragon scales or weighing scales. I would have liked a bit more discussion about what that was. Also, I would have liked to take it away with me so I know what I'm working on.	Clarity of explanation. Re-coded= Scaling targets given to young person after each session.
33	I looked forward to you writing all I said, I mean word by word, I found that really funny. I mean no one does that, it's unusual and good. No-one ever does that. It's good because let say you are ten years older and you wanted to look back or more importantly when you let me know you're listening. Mostly I feel teachers don't really listen which is sad.	Importance of note taking. Re-coded=Active listening.

Extract	Transcript extract content	Coding and re-coding
41	Well it was a bit difficult (goal setting) and I would have liked a bit more time thinking it through actually. I mean the targets I set were fine but maybe a little difficult to get done. It helped having you help me though. I would never set such targets on my own.	More thinking time. Pupil ownership of goals. Re-coded=Slower pace.
45	Maybe if I could tell to my mother and friends after each session or even my teachers so they know my targets and strengths. Can I meet with some of them after this session and share my letter you will write?	Systemic needs of pupils.
47	An idea I've been thinking about... in our meetings. I mean they need more creativity. It's OK just talking but I'd like more interesting stuff that would be good.	Creativity. Re-coded=Multi-sensory delivery.

4.2.2.3. Step 3. Searching for themes.

Codes were then visually mapped to look for associations and relationships related to answering the research question. During Step 3 some adjustments to the codes were made to confirm the data set. This included the re-coding of data in order to attempt to strengthen the construct validity of the overall coding procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was carried out during a feedback session and in collaboration with the researcher's Director of Studies. The process of re-coding allowed the checking of initial codes as well as adding a third party perspective as a method of strengthening the validity of the codes initially constructed by the researcher. For example, coding additions were made to Margie's data segment, "Like I said they were good, like funny actually. You make jokes. Which made it easy to talk. It's not like a boring lesson, and when the teachers keep blabbing on and on". The researcher had initially coded this extract only for humour. The re-coding process enabled the addition of the active listening code to this data segment (see Table 4). Other examples of this re-coding process can be viewed in Table 4.

The researcher used these patterns from the data to build the initial themes. This enabled the gathering of all the extracts related to each group of codes together into a series of themed categories. The data was examined under themes with the aim of answering the research question. The researcher then divided the codes into the following four general overarching initial themes:

- Interaction. Relating to increased practitioner skills of promoting productive interaction with pupils.
- Pace. The speed of the session delivery.
- Systemic. The need to utilise resources from wider pupil systems.
- Questioning. The development of practitioner's use of SF questioning techniques.

The evidence in support of each theme was reviewed again to check for consistency. At this stage four main themes were derived from the codes generated from the transcript data. The data was interpreted by the researcher and placed into codes that would offer insights into his SF practice development. These codes have been illustrated in Coding Tables 5-8 on pages 58 and 59. Each table provides coding evidence to support the creation of the four initial themes bulleted above.

Coding Tables 5-8. Codes that supported theme generation.

Table 5. Codes that supported the theme of Interaction.
Use of creative or non-verbal strategies for SF technique delivery.
Go with pupils' ideas and suggestions to promote motivated interaction. For example, use of games or activities the pupil finds motivating.
Importance of rapport building between practitioner and young person.
Be aware of own default mechanisms when delivering SF techniques to pupils.
Encourage discussion of positive resources and strengths.
Use of drawing as form of expression.
Begin sessions with a positive.
Careful use 'what else?' questioning during a SF session.
Promotion of active listening skills such as empathetic paraphrasing and summarising.
Recap of previous session content using verbatim notes.
Note-taking as confirmation of active listening.
Relaxed body language.
Be cautious and aware of utilising a 'teacher' style of delivery.
More frequency of miracle question usage.
Use of humour to release tension.
Pupil enjoyment of talking.

Table 6. Examples of codes that supported the theme of Pace.
Ensure clarity of scaling and miracle question explanation.
Calmness of delivery.
Stay with what's working.
Slow down verbal delivery. Check-in with pupil on this.
Move session forward at young person's pace.
Provide more time for reflection.
No pressure to cover all core SFBT components in a single session.

Table 7. Examples of codes that supported the theme of Systemic.
Targets written down and given to young person to take with them for use in-between sessions.
Scaling targets and information given to young person after each session.
Realistic and manageable target setting.
Encourage the discussion of strengths outside of school environment.
Locate resources in a variety of contexts.
Locate support that the young person feels motivated to utilise.
Involvement and support of teachers.
Involvement and support of parents.
Involvement and support of peers.
Plan for feedback opportunities to wider systems e.g. pupil successes and resources.
Keep SF session on young person's agenda.
Encourage pupil sharing of resources beyond one to one context.
Emphasise sustainable use of SF techniques.

Table 8. Codes that supported the theme of Questioning.
Use of careful probing to explore further opportunities.
Promote questioning atmosphere with pupil.
Use of challenging questions where appropriate.
Be careful of repetitive use of "What else?"
Courteous questioning.
More use of open questions.
Adapt use of miracle question.
Use MQ more frequently.
Allow space for questions to be considered and answered fully.
Use of circular questions to imagine a preferred future.
Use of clarifying questions to gauge correct understanding of pupil reality.
Use of 3rd person perspective questions that encourage pupils to imagine how their SR change might effect peers, school staff and family.

4.2.2.4. Step 4. Reviewing themes.

After the creation of the four themes, Interaction, Pace, Questioning and Systemic, the researcher decided to further refine the codes (as seen in Tables 5-8) and then re-group them into sub-themes within each main theme domain. The following four thematic maps (Figures 3-6) represent this process.

Figure 3. Interaction thematic map.

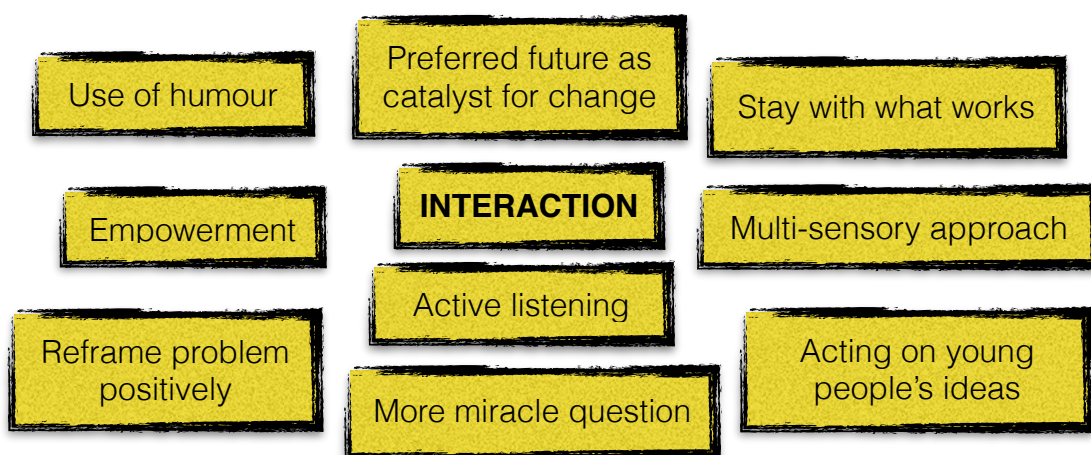


Figure 4. Pace thematic map.

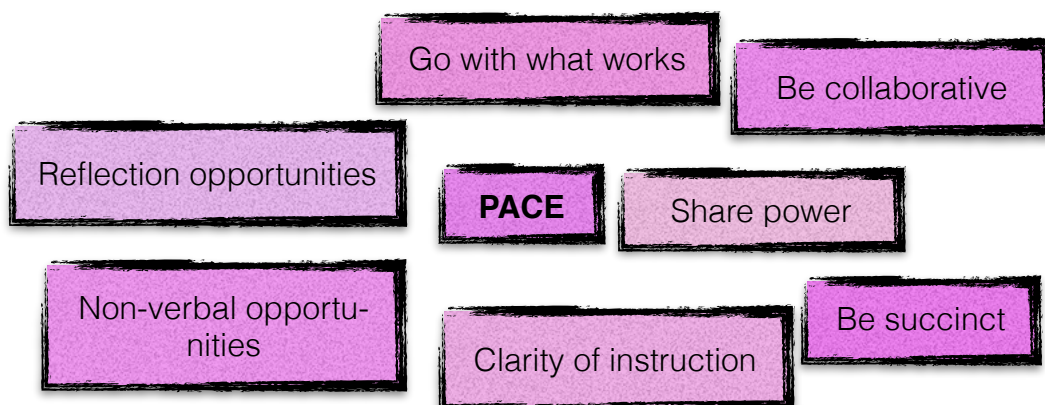


Figure 5. Questioning thematic map.

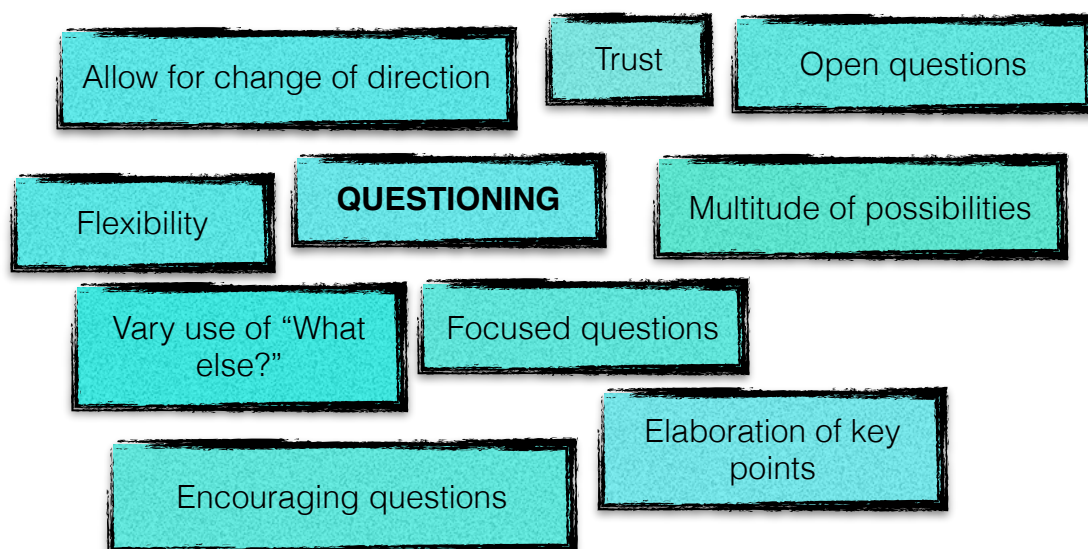
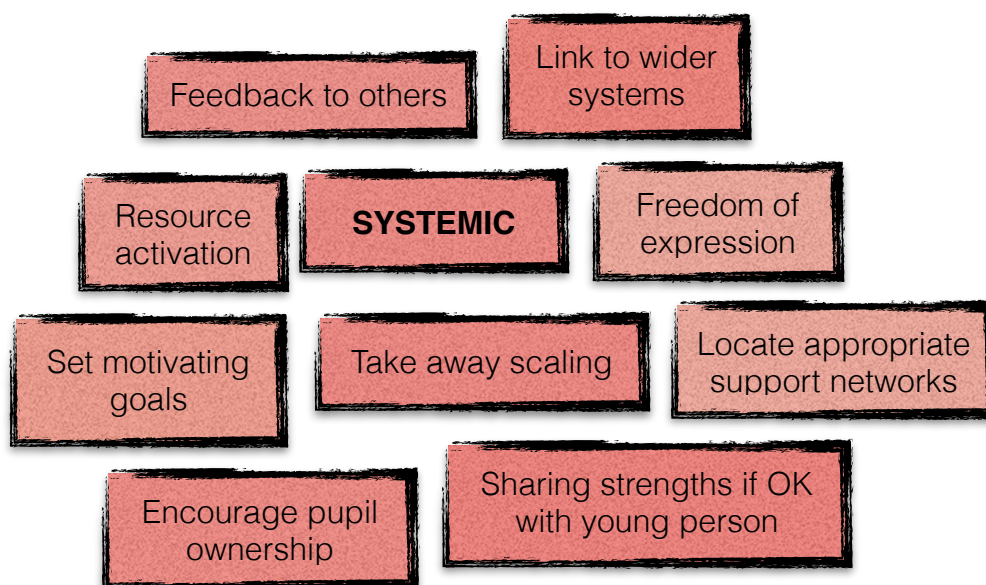


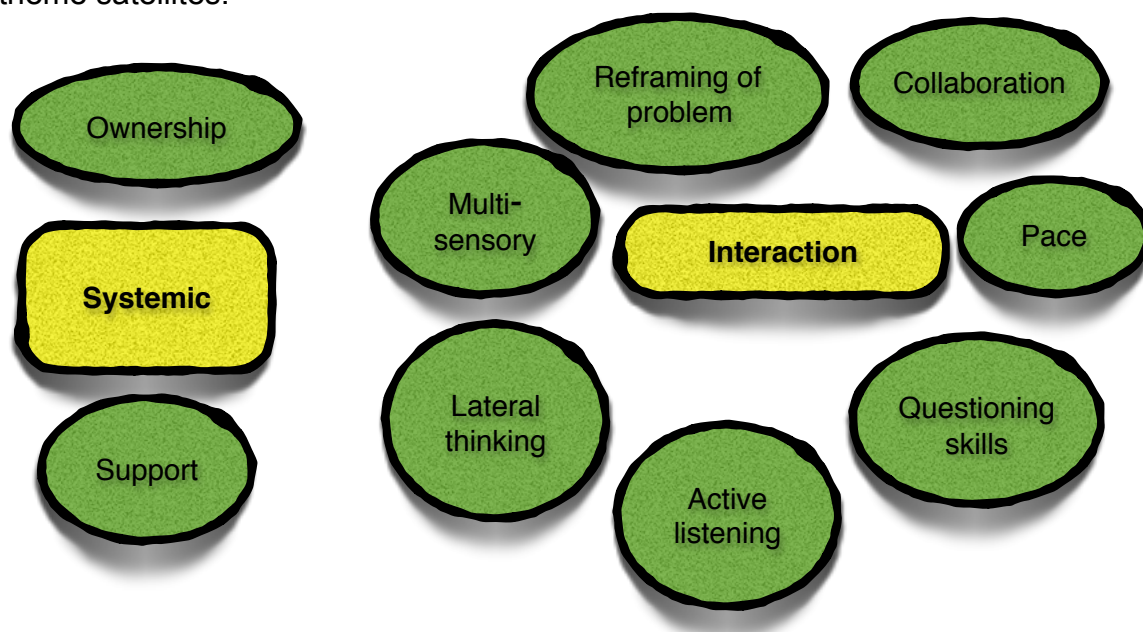
Figure 6. Systemic thematic map.



4.2.2.5. Step 5. Final thematic map.

Step 5 in the process involved the creation of the cycle 1 final thematic map summary (see Figure 7 below). The thematic map exemplified two main themes (yellow graphics) and a succinct collection of related sub-themes (green graphics). These were selected to capture the researcher's interpretation of the interview data collected.

Figure 7. Cycle 1 final thematic map summary with two main themes and sub-theme satellites.



As mentioned in section 3.6.3.2. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended the importance of testing whether or not each theme and sub-theme within the final thematic map could be described in no more than two succinct sentences. The researcher actioned this in the summary section 4.2.3 below.

4.2.3. Summary of cycle 1.

4.2.3.1. Key findings and modifications to SF practice for cycle 2.

In order to add richness to the cycle 1 final thematic map, the researcher will add detail to the descriptions of each theme and sub-theme as seen in Figure 7. The intention will be to reorient and explain the themes and sub-themes more fully within the context of answering the research question:

How can I use first person AR to develop SF practice in collaboration with Year 6 and 7 pupils when discussing their behavioural SR at school?

Each theme and sub-theme generated from AR cycle 1 will be explained using Braun and Clarke's (2006) succinctness sentence test (see italicised sentences below). In addition to this each theme and sub-theme will be further explored in terms of modifications made to SF practice and the impact of this on the second AR cycle.

Systemic theme. *The researcher defined this as the need to link the young person's SF work with their various systems extending beyond the one to one SF session context.* When actioning a SF approach in cycle 2 the researcher placed greater emphasis on the encouragement of the participants to utilise their wider systems as resources for SR development. This involved providing a space for the pupils to share their strengths, resources and exceptions to problem situations with teachers, parents and peers. When possible it was led by the young person.

Sub-theme of Ownership. *The need for young people to recognise and take ownership of their expertise and motivation for self-regulation development.* In cycle 2 the action researcher recognised the importance of putting the young person's expertise at the forefront of any self-regulation change they wished to make in their lives. The researcher attempted to facilitate the actioning of goals as Specific Measurable and Realistic Targets (SMART) and provided copies of scaling, written targets and session notes to encourage young person's ownership of their SF work.

Sub-theme of Support. *The need to actively listen to how a young person would like to be supported by others.* When working from a SF framework, the practitioner asked the pupils what support they required and felt comfortable utilising. The AR encouraged the participants to lead and shape what support they required.

Interaction theme. *The need to value, learn from and utilise each young person's unique set of interpersonal capacities.* The researcher attempted to take

account of individual differences when using SF techniques and principles. The pupils were asked how they would prefer to communicate to encourage the freedom needed to express their ideas and views. The researcher set out with the intention of utilising the miracle question more interactively as well as more often and if it appeared necessary.

Multi-sensory sub-theme. *Utilising both verbal and non-verbal methods of SR discovery.* The researcher modified SF practice so as to listen to each young person's unique multi-sensory need. This sub-theme focused on the need to listen to a young person's willingness to engage with talking strategies or non-verbal strategies. For example, utilising visualisation and colour when scaling and working through the miracle question.

Reframing of problem sub-theme. *Exploring exceptions and strengths.* The researcher investigated times when the pupils' SR challenge was not an issue and if pupil strengths could be used for self-regulation development.

Collaboration sub-theme. *Working together as a team. Recognising and encouraging the young person's expertise through a process of facilitation.* From the outset of working together in cycle 2 it was necessary to encourage an atmosphere of collaboration and co-construction of goals and targets. This included reminding the participants that a SF approach recognises that the pupils are the experts in the processes of their own SR development.

Pace sub-theme. *The need to move at a pace that suits the young person's processing capacities.* The researcher adopted the SF mantra of 'staying with what's working' and avoided rushing through each core component of the SFBT structure within a single session. This involved focusing on the aspects of the SF process that the young person responded well to. Therefore attempting to encourage a better atmosphere of calmness, exploration and trust.

Questioning skills sub-theme. *The use of appropriate closed, open and reflexive SF questions.* The researcher utilised clarifying questioning to allow space for a young person's SR discovery to take shape and be absorbed. The use SF questions such as "What would that change look like?", "What else?",

Who would notice the change?” (Thomas, 2014) were utilised to explore and facilitate a reflexive change in the young person’s understanding of their self-regulation.

Active listening skills sub-theme. *Less facilitator interpretation and more active listening to each pupil’s SR story.* The SF practitioner encouraged a more accurate depiction of the participant’s SR story. The continued use of note-taking and summarisation techniques using *verbatim* responses. The researcher offered the young person the chance to take away a copy of relevant SF session notes and their scaling sheet.

Lateral thinking sub-theme. *Encourage the reframing of a problem to include new possibilities.* The researcher listened to any random thoughts and ideas expressed by young person and explored these as possible new creative or intuitive directions for SR development.

4.2.3.2. Moving on to cycle 2.

This action research process involved moving SF learning in new directions. It was at this point that cycle 1 ended and cycle 2 began. The findings from this second cycle will now be explored.

Action research cycle 2.

4.3. Aims of cycle 2.

Cycle 2 data was gathered utilising four x 30 minute semi-structured interviews with each cycle 2 participant. The researcher transcribed the auditory data with the overall aim of answering the research question. Prior to the interviews with the new cycle 2 participants, the researcher met with the four Year 6 and 7 pupils three times for approximately 30 minutes over a period of 3 weeks.

Reflections and adaptations to SF practice throughout this time again formed the subsidiary phase within cycle 2 of the AR process. This will now be further detailed in section 4.3.1.

4.3.1. *Subsidiary phases within cycle 2 utilising learning from cycle 1.*

As in cycle 1 the subsidiary phases followed the McNiff and Whitehead (2011) action-cycle model. For cycle 2 this was operationalised through the further study of the UEL Solution Oriented Thinking Handbook (Thomas, 2014, p3) alongside the learning from cycle 1 data analysis. Adaptations to SF practice that came from this process from a subjective point of view included:

- Greater authenticity. Experiences from cycle 1 enabled the researcher to be more relaxed and composed and therefore hopefully showing more empathy towards the participants.
- More acknowledgment of participants' rights and awareness of the power dynamics in terms of the sharing of skills with the pupils. For example, with a Year 7 participant the sharing of our separate and unique skills appeared to create a more equal power balance.
- Being open to human fallibility. This included adopting a position of 'not-knowing' as well as admitting mistakes and living with ambiguity. For example the researcher pointed to the participants that "I am learning alongside you and am likely to make mistakes". "Mistakes are fine as long as we learn from them".

In the light of cycle 1 findings the researcher continued the analysis of de Shazer's 'Putting Difference to Work' (1991) seminal text. This resulted in the strengthening of SF knowledge in terms of a greater emphasis on focusing on solutions rather than problems. SF learning from cycle 1 pointed out the importance of reframing problems into exceptions and strengths. For example, asking the participants to reflect on who was affected by their apparent challenges with SR and promoting further discussion relating to whether or not these problems were potentially the result of systemic issues such as family dynamics, teacher classroom management, peer group or cultural influences.

There follows a series of eight further adaptations during cycle 2 resulting from cycle 1 analysis.

1. A more stringent evaluation of each weekly SF session. This was operationalised by a consideration of how to move beyond a one to one context and

attempts to link the young person more closely and creatively to their wider systems. This also included encouraging the participants to utilise feedback opportunities with school staff and family. For example, the researcher invited the uncle of one the Year 6 participants, a professional boxer, to join a feedback session with his teacher. The above mentioned pupil's improved classroom attention was the focus of his preferred future SR development. The meeting enabled the sharing of the pupil's higher attentional strengths in areas outside of school which potentially enabled the teacher to reframe their perception of the pupil's capacities in the area of SR.

2. The researcher encouraged more participant ownership through the co-construction of SMART. For example, a Year 7 participant in cycle 2 decided to approach the school SENCo and asked for a classroom seating position change in her English lessons in order to better regulate her attention. Another example included providing the participants with their own copies of 'scaling' sheets and written targets. These also enabled greater pupil ownership.

3. Encouragement of the pupils to identify for themselves the support they needed and who they felt comfortable with in order to action their goals. See Blue's data extract 55 in Table 9 for further details.

4. More frequent and creative use of the miracle question as well as listening to participants' multi-sensory needs. Cycle 2 included the new innovation of a role-play visualisation technique as suggested by cycle 1 participant feedback. For example when discussing preferred futures the participants chose to close their eyes and visualise what might be different if their miracle had happened.

5. Staying with what's working and not moving quickly through each core component of the SFBT structure. At the same time encouraging a climate of calmness, exploration and trust. For example, more frequent use of resource activation questions such as, "What is it about you that makes that possible?" Also, noticing if a participant particularly enjoys a resource and staying with it during conversation using variations of the "what else" question including 'such as?', "what do you mean by that?" and "is there anything else?".

6. Use of clarifying questioning to provide space for a young person's self-discovery to take shape and be absorbed. For example use of open questions such as, "what would that change look like?" and "who would notice at school?".

7. Using specific questions to confirm that participant's next steps of action were concrete and observable. For example, "what would your next step look like?", "who would notice?", "what would they say?", "what would be different?" and "how would you feel about it?".

8. The participants were again presented with a letter at the end of their 3rd session outlining successes and the researcher's appreciation for their support. Semi-structured interviews took place directly after the participants third session. Further details of the data collection and analysis will be explained in section 4.3.2.

4.3.2. *Cycle 2: data collection and second Thematic Analysis (TA).*

Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of TA was again utilised to identify themes and explore how SF practice could be developed further using the feedback gathered from the interviews with the four new cycle 2 participants.

4.3.2.1. *Step 1: Becoming familiar with cycle 2 data.*

The overall word count for participant data transcribed within cycle 2 was 8,296.

Pseudonym names for cycle 2 participants will be known as:

- 2 x Year 6 boys - Blue and Jake
- 2 x Year 7 girls - Jin and Vera

Transcripts for all cycle 2 participants can be viewed on the attached CD-ROM.

4.3.2.2. *Step 2: Generating initial codes.*

Mirroring cycle 1, participant data was coded for participant feedback that could be used to develop SF practice. The coding of each transcript was then

checked for overall consistency. This involved an initial re-coding of each transcript (see Table 9).

Table 9. Cycle 2 participant data extracts, initial codes and re-coding evidence.

KEY: **Red Text** = UEL peer group re-coding of Jin's extracts.

Green Text = This researcher's re-coding descriptions.

Extract	Transcript extract content	Coding and re-coding.
14-Jin	I liked the fact that you didn't ask anything too deep or personal. That was what I had experienced before when talking with other adults at school. Questions that are too deep are my business. So was good that you didn't do that. It was all mostly based on the topic. Keeps it level.	Initial code: Don't push too hard. Re-coded for: Don't get too deep or personal. Maintaining autonomy. Balance of Power and pupil autonomy.
42-Jin	Well because whenever I asked the teacher for help she would sing this song and I felt uncomfortable. I didn't really wanna think up targets for this area of school. I liked how you changed the subject from Spanish to other subjects like English and RE I felt comfortable trying out targets.	Initial code: Cue into motivational goals. Re-coded for: Listen and follow young persons lead when co-constructing targets. Ownership. Encourage novel use of resources.
19-Jake	Talking about strengths was good. I mean I already talked my boxing and that was good, you asked questions that got me thinking about what I was good at...rather than school stuff. I'm not really used to that outside family.	Initial code: Collaborative talking is useful. Re-coded for: Valuable resources activated within out of school context. Ensure clarity of understanding.
72-Jake	My dad loves boxing and my target was to watch the video of my fight over again and think of and note down powerful words to use in my writing. It was more fun doing this with someone that I feel calm with ...	Initial code: Parents as valuable resource network. Re-coded for: Novel use of resource activation. Ownership of resources.

Extract	Transcript extract content	Coding and re-coding
12-Vera	<p>P: I don't normally tell someone about ... the struggles I've had... feel quite relieved to tell someone like you.</p> <p>I: Tell me more about that?</p> <p>P: Um. I don't really talk a lot about things...um...um...I find it hard to ... talk to about my... struggles. It feels like a weights off my shoulder.</p> <p>I: OK anything else about that?</p> <p>P: ...I feel happy...That I can come clean on every. That's good.</p>	<p>Initial code: Provide space to talk and share.</p> <p>Re-coded for: Provide opportunity for young person to disclose problem if needed.</p> <p><i>Autonomy...be aware of power dynamics.</i></p>
50-Vera	<p>Um. Yeah. Well...that you helped me get a bad thing away was useful. Speaking with SENCo made it happen. Nothing would of changed without that. It was my idea which I liked. Normally teachers listen to other teachers. That's what I've learned at school. They don't really listen to students.</p>	<p>Initial code: Co-construct goals and advocate on behalf of the young person if they feel it is necessary.</p> <p>Re-coded for: Location of concrete and observable next step is vital.</p> <p><i>Ownership of targets.</i></p>
25, 26-Blue	<p>I: Next question. Did you find anything difficult?</p> <p>P: Um...Not really. Well yes I did find thinking up ideas or targets a bit hard. Sometimes I didn't know what to say like you think about it a lot...I mean you can double think about things without telling anyone. It's helpful to have more time thinking about ideas that could become targets for me to try. If you don't think about them carefully you will most likely not do them.</p>	<p>Initial code: More thinking time for targets.</p> <p>Re-coded for: Importance of hard work when thinking about goals.</p> <p><i>Goals that pupil is motivated to try out.</i></p>
55-Blue	<p>I: Did you feel like you had enough support?</p> <p>P: Er, yeah. My friend Abi. She's one of my best friends who I've known for most of my life. That was useful thinking about how I could use her and our friendship to support me with difficulties. Like if I could into a fight she would say walk away and that helped a lot cos better than having a teacher say it.</p>	<p>Initial code: Peer support networks.</p> <p>Re-coded for: <i>Pupil ownership of novel resource activation.</i></p>

4.3.2.3. Step 3. Searching for themes.

Coding ideas were then visually mapped to look for associations and ideas. This involved the gathering of codes onto 'post-it' notes and arranging them into initially themed group categories in order to address the research question (See Appendix H for an example of this 'post-it' note analysis). All 'post-it' note initial theme generation documents can be viewed on the attached CD-ROM.

4.3.2.4. Further re-coding within Step 3.

During a UEL data analysis session in November 2015 the researcher's fellow EP trainees re-coded Jin's data set testing the validity of the codes. The coding choices were supported by the researcher's trainee peer group at UEL. The peer group coding additions that were made to Jin's data segment did not effect the overall theme generation. See Table 9 to view UEL peer group re-coding of Jin's red extracts.

4.3.2.5. Coding evidence to support theme choices.

The evidence that supported each theme was reviewed again to check for consistency. Four main themes were derived from the coding process. Step 3 concluded by subsuming the codes into four overarching themes and sub-themes. This was represented as an initial thematic map (see Appendix I). The bullet points below represent a summary of this initial thematic map:

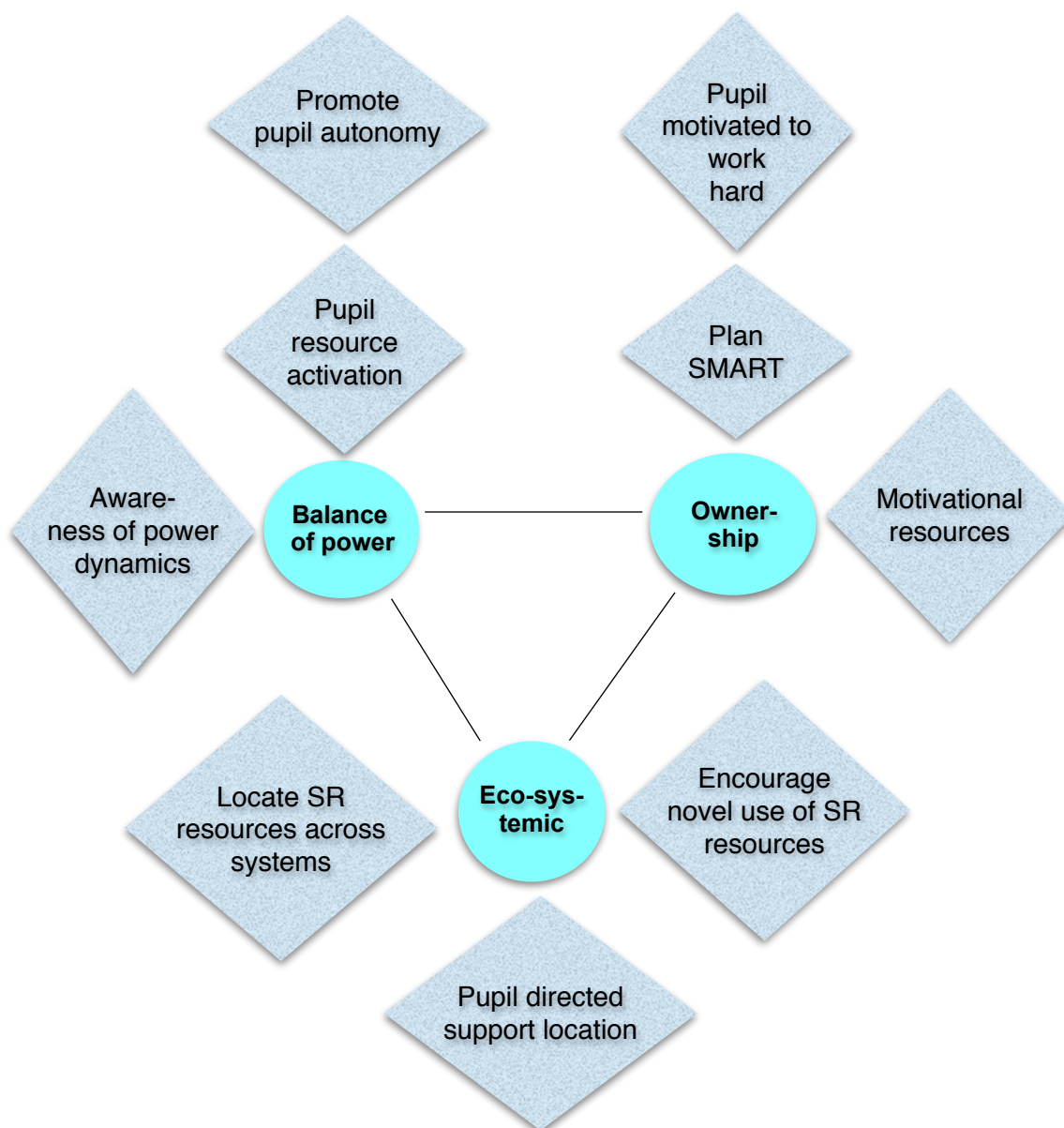
- Balance of power (between young person and facilitator)
- Support (for young person to achieve their goals and share skills)
- Eco-systemic (extending session outcomes beyond a one to one context)
- Ownership (young persons activation of own resources in novel situations).

When constructing the initial thematic map it became apparent that no one theme stood in isolation from another. During this analysis the researcher reflected on the interconnectedness of the four initial themes. For example, having a balance of power seemed to impact on the young persons' abilities to utilise and take charge of their own support structures and SF outcome oriented work.

4.3.2.6. Step 4. Reviewing themes.

After deciding the four main theme areas, Balance of power, Support, Eco-systemic and Ownership, the researcher decided to further refine the main themes and group the large number of sub-themes generated in the initial thematic map into broader categories. See Figure 8.

Figure 8. Developed thematic map.



As can be seen from the developed thematic map in Figure 8 the theme of support was subsumed into the eco-systemic theme. This was altered because the support structures the young people identified as being useful were often locat-

ed beyond the one to one SF sessions context and were within the wider school and family systems.

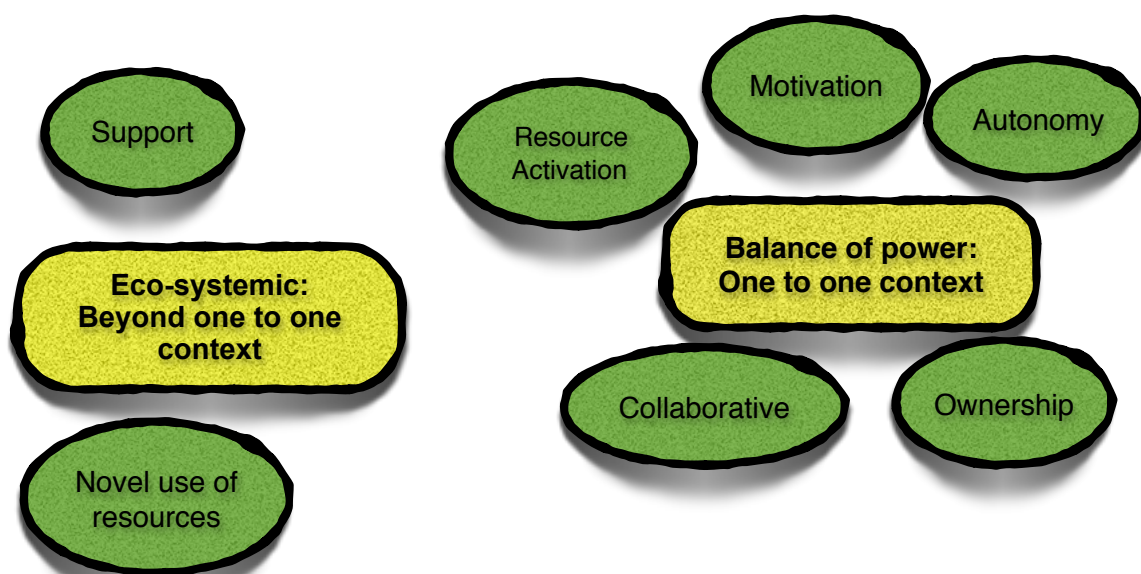
According to Braun and Clarke (2006) “Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (p 91). At this stage in the TA the researcher recognised “clear and identifiable distinctions” between the three main themes but also remained aware of how interconnected they were. Despite this, the three themes and sub-themes formed a coherent pattern and provided a useful framework from which to develop SF practice and therefore added useful insights into answering the research question.

Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that once the researcher establishes clear and coherent themes they should return to their data set again in order to evaluate validity and check that the candidate themes mirror the meanings contained in the data set as a whole. In accordance with this instruction the entire data set was re-coded one final time. Please refer to the **green highlighted** re-coding descriptions in Table 9 on pages 69 and 70.

4.3.2.7. Step 5. Final thematic map.

Step 5 involved the construction of the cycle 2 final thematic map (see Figure 9 on the next page). This outlines the two main themes (yellow graphics) and a collection of sub-themes (green graphics) evolving out of further refinement and the need to create more distinct theme representations. These were selected to illustrate the richness of data collected throughout the cycle 2 action research process.

Figure 9. Cycle 2 final thematic map with sub-themes.



4.3.3. Summary of cycle 2.

4.3.3.1. Key findings and implications for possible adaptations of practice for ongoing SF work beyond cycle 2.

As instructed by Braun and Clarke (2006) each of the final themes and sub-themes as shown in Figure 9 should be able to be described in no more than two succinct sentences (see italicised sentences below). In order to add clarity to the overall cycle 2 analysis this ‘succinctness test’ will be actioned below in the context of answering the research question, How can I use first person AR to develop SF practice in collaboration with Year 6 and 7 pupils when discussing their behavioural SR at school?

Theme of eco-systemic: Beyond a one to one context.

Succinct sentence: *The need to recognise that the one to one direct working relationship exists within a set of wider systems and to empower and encourage pupils to connect their SR development and goals to the resources within these systems.*

Sub-theme of novel use of resources.

Succinct sentence: *the importance of putting the young persons' resources at the forefront of any self-regulation change they wish to make in their lives. Facilitating their use of these resources in novel situations.*

Sub-theme of utilisation of support.

Succinct sentence: *the space so that the young person can lead and shape what support they may or may not need.*

To add richness to the cycle 2 final thematic map analysis the following paragraph will add further details related to the eco-systemic theme and its two satellite sub-themes. This theme and its related sub-themes refers to the importance of providing a comfortable space for the young person to explore how they will share their strengths and exceptions to problem situations with others. This should be co-constructed by the young person and the facilitator but should ultimately be undertaken on the young person's terms. The SF practitioner's role should be to support the young person's novel use of their own resources so that their SR goals can made SMART. Again recognising the need to listen to how a young person would like to be supported by others. When working from a SF framework the facilitator should ask the client if they would like to be supported but should not assume this need exists or even attach the practitioner's own values to this possible need. Finally the use of questions that might encourage the young person to visualise how they action their goals with or without the support of others.

Theme of balance of power in one to one context.

Succinct sentence: *The need to be aware of and address the power dynamics that exist when working with young people with self-regulation difficulties within a one to one context.*

Autonomy sub-theme.

Succinct sentence: *The need to facilitate the independence or freedom of the young person's expression and goal setting actions.*

Motivation sub-theme.

Succinct sentence: *The need to look for resources and areas of self-regulation that the young person is already using or is motivated to use, discuss and investigate.*

Resource activation sub-theme. *Encouraging the activation of the young person's inherent self-regulation resources and the expression of this in their terms.*

Collaborative co-construction sub-theme.

Succinct sentence: *The need to work together as a team supporting the processes of the young person's goal setting.*

Ownership sub-theme.

Succinct sentence: *The need for young people to recognise and take ownership of the goal setting processes encapsulated within the aspects of their own self-regulation they may wish to develop.*

4.4. Overall summary of findings.

The researcher set out to develop SF practice using two cycles of action research and worked collaboratively with eight Year 6 and 7 pupils to develop their self-regulation in areas of their choosing. The AR cycles ran over the course of two terms in second year of the Educational Psychology doctorate training. Interviews were used to investigate the pupils' feedback on how the researcher could develop SF practice. This data was scrutinised using 'top-down' Thematic Analysis. The researcher set out to use the themes and sub-themes generated from this analysis to modify and move SF practice in new directions.

Findings from cycle 1 included the modification of the SF practice for use during cycle 2 in the following ways:

1. The recognition that young people do not exist in a one to one contextual vacuum and that learning from within this context could be encouraged across other settings in their lives.

2. Young people could be encouraged to take more ownership of the SF process and they require carefully targeted support for this to become sustainable and useful to the development of their self-regulation capacities.
3. To take account of individual differences when using SF techniques and questions in terms of communication styles and the pace of sessions.
4. Focus on aspects of the SF process that the young person responds well to and encourage a climate of calmness, exploration and trust.
5. Utilise multi-sensory methods of communication and discovery when working together as a team to investigate exceptions and strengths.
6. Foster less facilitator interpretation and the reframing of so called 'problems' to include new possibilities.

Findings from cycle 2 that augment findings from cycle 1 that will continue to modify and develop ongoing SF practice beyond cycle 2 and within the researcher's day-to-day EP work include the following points:

1. The empowering and encouraging of the young person to connect their learning, ideas and goals to their systems.
2. Encouraging young people to utilise their resources in novel self-regulatory situations in collaborative and co-constructed ways.
3. Encouraging the young person to locate the support they view as useful in terms of them reaching their aspirational goals.
4. Awareness of the power dynamics that exist when working with young people with self-regulation difficulties.
5. Actioning creative and child-led methods of interaction in order to encourage young persons' autonomy.
6. Locate resources and areas of self-regulation that the young person is motivated to use, discuss and investigate on their terms.
7. Finally the need for the young person to recognise and take ownership of their self-regulatory goal setting tasks.

These findings will be explored further within the context of the discussion section in chapter 5.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1. *Introduction to chapter.*

This final chapter will discuss and critically evaluate the findings of this study under the headings of the core components of SFBT that were developed when answering the research question. To remind the reader these core components included (De Shazer & Berg, 1997):

- 1: Resource activation.
- 2: Goal setting including preferred future questioning and miracle question to imagine a preferred future.
- 3: Exploring exceptions to problems.
- 4: Scaling to prioritise goals and measure progress.
- 5: Break for reflection.
- 6: Agreement of next steps.

Throughout Chapter 5's critical analysis the research findings will be linked to relevant literature and existing research as well as data extracts from this research. The discussion of these data extracts will be used to illustrate adaptations to SF practice from a critical perspective. An evaluation of the methodology will be carried out followed by a brief consideration of the researcher's feedback of findings to pupils, schools and EPs. Chapter 5 will continue with a list of conclusions highlighting modifications to SF practice developed during this study. It will end with a brief exploration of the impact of this study on the researcher's use of SF techniques in wider EP practice.

5.2. *Discussion and critique of research findings.*

This section will critique the findings and assess their significance related to the researcher's SF practice when training as an EP.

5.2.1. *Reflections on modifications to the use of resource activation.*

The purpose of resource activation is to activate and utilise the resources, strengths, abilities and successes of a client (EBTA, 2012) when working along-

side them. According to EBTA (2012) this competency-based approach holds the assumption that a person already has at least some of the resources to locate solutions, but may need further support in doing this.

5.2.2. Examples / critique of methods of resource activation during cycle 1.

During cycle 1 it became evident that the researcher's use of humour was important in building rapport with the participants. The EBTA (2012) SF practice definition mentions that positive humour can promote several realities including closer rapport, a more relaxed atmosphere and shared laughter. (EBTA, 2012). When working with the four participants during cycle 1 humour proved to be an effective approach for establishing rapport which appeared to lead to a more relaxed atmosphere and easier expression of strengths and resources. Thematic Analysis seemed to confirm that the participants responded positively to the use of humour. To illustrate this point, cycle 1 feedback noted,

8. **Margie:** Like I said they were good, like funny actually. You make jokes. Which made it easy to talk. It's not like a boring lesson, and when the teachers keep blabbing on and on.
9. **Daniel:** Uh. So you like when things are funny? What is it about jokes that you like?
10. **Margie:** It makes me relax and talk more so it's not so tense. That's just what I like.

The researcher's development of the use of humour involved also the managing of stress levels before each SF session. This was achieved by taking five minutes before each session to focus on breathing and relaxation. Regulating the natural tensions in this way allowed for a more relaxed approach to the use of humour when working with the participants. Throughout cycle 1 however the use of humour was not always appropriate and it became evident that not all participants felt comfortable engaging in it. Lipchik (2002) refers to the importance of SF practitioners treating all clients uniquely and upholding a curious mindset. The natural inclination of the researcher was to use humour during all the SF session interactions. However this would not fit with the underlying theoretical assumption that all clients are unique Lipchik (2002).

Another area of SF practice modification involved the development of questioning to promote the activation of pupil resources. For example using the question

“*What did that look like?*” in situations where participants were identifying self-regulation resources provided the opportunity for productive discussion around their resource activation. The researcher’s use of verbatim notes taken during Keith’s second SF session highlighted the resources activated as a response to this question:

Keith: It’s harder to concentrate during the beginning of lessons

Daniel: When do you find it easier to concentrate?

Keith: Middle of the lesson

Daniel: *What did that look like?*

Keith: I concentrate better sitting next to a more sensible friend.

These extracts describe the use of SF questioning as part of the subsidiary AR phase during cycle 1. SF questioning appeared to steer Keith into a discussion towards examples of his concentration resource activation. Related to this point Keith stated:

Keith: In these situations I can write three to four pages of A4 using my the pencil my grandpa gave me.

A critique of the use of questioning is that the researcher did not investigate the link between Keith’s better concentration and grandpa’s pencil particularly on an emotional resource level. According to one of Lipchik’s (2002) solution-focused theoretical assumptions emotions are an integral part of all problems and solutions. Therefore not following the potential emotional link “the pencil my grandpa gave me” could have limited the researcher’s understanding of Keith’s emotional resources. This may have also limited the possibilities of Keith formulating his own solutions and greater understanding of himself.

5.2.3. *Discussion of further adaptations to resource activation.*

Thematic Analysis of cycle 1 participant data identified a variety of possible improvements to SF practice. Modifications related to the development of methods for promoting resource activation included:

5.2.4. *The inclusion of resources located beyond the school setting.*

This refers to the importance of connecting pupils to their wider systems during one to one work. Asking participants to discuss their resources outside of school

resulted in enthusiastic responses related to resource activation. An extract from Jake's transcript highlights this point:

11. **Jake:** Um. Talking about strengths was good...my boxing and that was good how you asked questions that got me thinking about what I was good at. I mean really good rather than school stuff. I'm not really used to that outside of family.

The activation of this resource encouraged Jake to utilise an area of considerable strength in terms of his boxing concentration skills within his school environment. Jake went on to state that,

12. **Jake:** I learnt that like ... I didn't really think I was that good at Literacy. When we came up with my targets I really focused and put more effort and focus than I would usually put into them things.
13. **Daniel:** Why do you think that was?
14. **Jake:** Um...[pause] ...don't really know, maybe because I was more motivated by thinking about my skills and strengths doing our sessions.

Development of SF practice here included the idea of linking motivational resources outside of the school environment to pupil self-regulation development within school. This was possible when working with Jake and Keith and confirmed the importance of encouraging pupils to utilise and validate their own skills and expertise when engaged in resource activation (EBTA, 2012). However both Maria and Amy were not as keen to discuss their self-regulation skills outside of the school context. In respect of this matter ongoing SF work should reflect the idea that 'no one size fits all'. Lipchik (2002) postulated that the SF facilitator needs to understand how to trigger the client so they can potentially respond and not be resistant. Therefore with more creativity and recognition of the many faceted emotional differences between Year 6 boys and Year 7 girls, the girls may have opened up and revealed more of their out of school worlds.

5.2.5. Multi-sensory methods of resource activation.

Pupil feedback highlighted the importance of including multi-sensory approaches to resource activation. This was highlighted in the following extracts:

15. **Keith:** see (ing) ... strengths. I mean actually see them, not just talk about them because I don't really like talking too much, I prefer doing stuff. Like with a tennis ball or a football.
16. **Max:** I enjoyed it at the end. When we played football. (To discuss skills).

Adaptations incorporated developing multi-sensory approaches when discussing the participants' skills and strengths. With Max and Keith this included combining talking with pupils' passions and strong emotional links to their favourite sport, football. Leggett's (2009) creative application of SF counselling when working with young people advocated the use of verbal and non-verbal methods of expression that combine the use of talking and playing. It also enabled a person-centred and basic understanding of the concept of goals for these boys.

Further examples included utilising an iPad to bring Jake's passion for boxing alive in a more interactive and creative way. Jake mentioned that:

17.**Jake:** It was good to look at YouTube clips that I brought in of my favourite boxers and talk about that.

Other multi-sensory adaptations to practice also included going for a run with Jin where she was able to discuss her athletic ability with some enthusiasm. Her interview feedback regarding her resource activation was largely positive:

18.**Daniel:** OK. Did you learn anything about yourself during our sessions?

19.**Jin:** The fact that I can do it if I want to. And that I had more strength than I thought I did. Which was good.

20.**Jin:** My strengths. Um. It made me feel good about myself. I really liked it. [pause] ...

Time restrictions limited some of the possibilities and ideas that the participants had in this domain. For example. Margie wanted to make puppets and Jake wanted to set-up a boxing competition to share his talent with his friends. Neither of these activities were achieved. Finding enough time to create opportunities for working in this way as an EP may therefore be a somewhat challenging and unrealistic modification given the limitations of contemporary service delivery. Leggett (2009) does not refer to these areas of multi-sensory working which suggests the need for further research into these more kinaesthetic approaches.

5.2.6. *Considering the pace of the session in terms of resource activation.*

The idea of staying with what's working, not rushing and encouraging a climate of calmness, exploration and trust during the SF sessions emerged as a another

er area of SF practice development. Specific interview data from Amy critiqued the researcher's cycle 1 SF practice in terms of pace. She noted,

26. **Amy:** I was worried you might move on too quickly as you kinda did that sometimes. I mean not giving me time to fully answer a question.

Feedback from Amy contributed to the development of SF practice throughout cycle 2 in terms of slowing down the delivery of SF techniques as well as checking-in with pupils when they were ready to move on to a new session content. This point is validated by Lipchik (2002) who noted the importance of utilising the most suitable approach for an individual rather than a speedy application of a SF technique. In this way SF practice should be adapted so that when working as a SF practitioner, the researcher listens and responds to a pupils' needs in the moment which was clearly not actioned in the researcher's SF work with Amy as she mentions in extract 26.

5.2.7. Encouraging 'spontaneous creative (lateral) thinking' in terms of resource activation.

Adaptations to practice included listening to participants' creative thoughts and innovative ideas expressed with the possibility of exploring these as possible new directions for pupil SR development. For example Margie mentioned,

21. **Margie:** Maybe if I could tell to my mother and friends after each session or even my teachers so they know my strengths. Can I meet with some of them after this session and share my letter you will write?

This extract highlights Margie's use of creative thinking related to sharing her strengths. After Margie's interview a meeting was set up between her french teacher, mother and school SENCo. Margie led the meeting which provided her with an opportunity to share her resources and discuss how these could be utilised to aid her concentration during french lessons. This is an indication of the possible empowerment that can take place during SF intervention.

Further to this, in cycle 2, Year 6 pupil Blue fed-back his strengths to his best friend Abigail as a part of resource activation by utilising his peer support systems in a novel way:

56. **Blue:** Er, yeah. My friend Abi. She's one of my best friends who I've known for most of my life. That was useful thinking about how I could use her and our

friendship to support me with difficulties. Like if I could into a fight she would say walk away and that helped a lot cos better than having a teacher it.

These ideas and strategies further illustrate Lipchik's (2002) solution-focused theoretical assumptions which encouraged the creation of suitable approaches for intervention tailored to the individual, emphasising the need to respond to pupils' needs in creative and sometimes non-direct ways.

5.2.8. Further adaptations to resource activation.

36. **Blue:** ...You could of introduced yourself with more detail. Like you asked me for a skill and that. But I didn't really know yours. That would have been better. Share more about you so I feel like I wanna share about me.

This challenge given to the researcher by this Year 6 pupil Blue of sharing of the researcher's own adult skills and resources in addition to Blue then sharing with the researcher relates well to the cycle 2 theme of balance of power. This emphasises the need to be aware of and to address the multilayered power dynamics that exist when working with young people in a one to one context.

Kellet, Forrest, Dent and Ward (2004) referred to the idea that the balance of power in schools is heavily weighted towards adults. Therefore the control of pupils' use of time, space and modes of social interaction could be challenged when working with an EP in a one to one context using SF techniques. In future SF practice this could be operationalised by the researcher responding more positively to Blue's suggestion for the researcher to share more of the researcher's skills and resources.

5.3. Reflections on goal setting when using the miracle question and preferred-future questioning.

According to EBTA (2012) being 'future-oriented' includes finding the best hopes and desires related to participants' problems and helping the progress towards these hopes and desires. A method of enacting this includes utilising a tool known as the miracle question (MQ). The MQ encourages a pupil to look beyond the present reality towards future possibilities. It can also allow a client

to visualise how life could be different if their problem was no longer present (Burns & Hulisi, 2005).

Participant understanding of the MQ is crucial. Questions such as the following were considered and modifications attempted accordingly:

- Was the researcher's interpretation and explanation of what a MQ is good enough?
- Did his own espoused values of honesty, active-listening and compassion alter how the researcher's perceived participant preferred futures possibly limiting their goal setting?
- Were the young peoples' person-centred goals their own or mine?.

5.3.1. *Examples and critique of miracle question usage for goal setting.*

Participant data identified a variety of possible improvements to SF practice in this area. Modifications related to the development of methods for goal setting included:

5.3.2. *Modification to language delivery of MQ reflecting the need to improve client ownership of goals.*

Leggett (2009) points out that the language of the MQ question itself may need adapting to meet the needs of pupil's individual differences. Cycle 1 transcript data illustrated this need to adapt language delivery. For example,

26. Margie Well it was a bit difficult (use of MQ) and I would have liked a bit more time thinking it through actually.

Modifications to practice included the wording of the MQ itself so that it could be better realised. This included utilising Leggett's (2009, page 197) MQ adaptation, "Imagine that tomorrow was a perfect day and the problem you are having today was gone. What would that perfect day look like?". Using this MQ adaptation with Polish EAL pupil Margie possibly aided her understanding and confirmed the need for flexibility in SF practice.

5.3.3. *Frequency of miracle question use.*

Participants noted the need for more use of the MQ as most of them appeared to find it to be an enriching and interactive tool when imagining their preferred-futures. The following cycle 1 participants suggested that,

85. **Margie.** Well it was actually pretty fun as well you got to think about a miracle happening and they don't ever happen. Maybe when Jesus was around. It would have been better if it was used more. I mean you only used it once. More miracles questions would have been better.

34. Keith. I liked the miracle question but it was too short. I mean it could of been done more. That helped me think about targets and what it would be like if things were different.

These suggestions highlight the importance of reflecting on Lipchik's (2002) solution-focused theoretical assumption to respond to pupils' needs and to encourage an atmosphere of curiosity. Atkinson and Amesu (2007) also make the point that there may be possible cultural implications when using the word 'miracle' for instance in extract 85 above it was possible that Margie attributed religious connotations from her Polish Catholic background.

5.3.4. *Multi-sensory use of MQ reflecting the need to improve client ownership of goals.*

22. **Amy:** ...It was interactive. Sort of made me think about the future positives. If it had happened. I mean it was really imaginative. Maybe it could have been done as a kinda visual thing with eyes closed and really spend a bit more time with it.

Learning resulting from the theme of encouraging ownership through the use of multi-sensory methods included the use of visualisation when delivering MQ to clients. Amy's feedback suggested a useful modification in terms of using visualisation and closing one's eyes to better imagine future possibilities and goals. However other pupils were not open to this idea.

The idea of drawing the preferred-future was fed-back via participant interviews during both AR cycles. This was not actioned as part of this research as the pupils preferred a talking approach when experiencing the MQ. This idea could be adapted for future SF work. Leggett (2009) suggested that young people may be aided by drawing and illustrating preferred futures arising from the MQ.

Also there would be the need to provide enough time for pupils to add details and describe their drawings where appropriate as well as to possibly develop the confidence to draw when working alongside a SF practitioner.

5.3.5. *Encouraging pupil autonomy.*

Encouraging pupil autonomy when working on their preferred futures was also explored. Learning here included encouraging a balance of power where the pupils took ownership of their preferred futures. For example, Jin postulated some useful evaluative analysis,

22.**Jin:** For Spanish it was very difficult and a bit confusing as I didn't really know of any ideas or targets.

23.**Daniel:** Why was that difficult in Spanish?

24.**Jin:** I didn't really wanna think up targets for this area of school. I liked how you changed the subject from Spanish to other subjects like English and RE I felt more comfortable with trying out my targets in.

The researcher's ability to recognise the need to encourage ownership of targets is vindicated by Lipchik's (2002) SF theoretical assumption that the facilitator cannot change a client but rather the client must change themselves. The context behind the extracts 22-24 above was an illustration of what Lipchik (2002) refers to as a power struggle between the SF practitioner and client. In hindsight the researcher was attempting to push Jin to create a target for her Spanish SR development. Listening and responding to Jin's SR development ideas made it more possible for Jin to take ownership of her preferred choice of working on SR in English.

5.4. *Modifications to the use of finding exceptions to pupils problems.*

According to Atkinson and Ames (2007) investigating times when a client's problem is not an issue for them helps to enable the identification of useful resources. The facilitator may utilise questions to encourage the client to think about times when the problem does not happen, when it presents less often or when the problem is more manageable.

5.4.1. *Examples and critique of methods of exception finding throughout cycle 1 and 2.*

Thematic Analysis (TA) of cycle 1 and 2 participant data identified a variety of possible developments to practice. Evidence of these included:

5.4.2. *Adaptations utilising participant peer-group support.*

Jake's cycle 1 boxing example used in section 5.2.3.1. highlighted the importance of encouraging pupils to utilise their 'out of school' positive resources when locating exceptions to self-regulation issues they were having within school.

Moving into cycle 2 this idea was further developed in terms of locating exceptions and novel resources in terms of peer-group support for self-regulation change. Blue identified an exception to his problem of getting into fights with other Year 6 boy as being when he spent time with his best friend Abi. For example he mentioned,

61. **Daniel:** What does that tell you about the need of other peoples support?

62. **Blue:** That I need it and I have it. I mean it's around me all the time. I rely on friends.

Blue was motivated to use this peer support when developing his self-regulation at school within the context of our one to one environment. However the reality of how Blue actioned this support is unknown. Atkinson and Amesu (2007) refer to the idea of relapse in terms of the sustainability of a clients' use of exceptions. Preparing for relapse in this way would be a useful further modification to practice not actioned during this research. This could have included discussing the realistic possibility of Abi's support not being present at all times. Further this point Burns and Hulusi (2007) refer to the positive impact and benefits of SF work in groups. Therefore Abi and more peer support could have been involved in the SF sessions with Blue.

5.5. *The use of scaling in SF practice.*

According to Atkinson and Ames (2007) scaling questions can be used to motivate young people into gauging their progress with targets set towards their preferred-future.

5.5.1. Examples and critique of modifications to use of scaling.

Participant data resulted in the following modifications to SF practice:

5.5.2. *Clarity of scaling description.*

Cycle 1 data confirmed that some participants struggled to understand scaling as it had been presented to them by the researcher. For example, Margie noted, 31. **Margie.** At first I thought you were talking about dragon scales or weighing scales. I would have liked a bit more discussion about what that was.

During cycle 2 this need for clarification was developed utilising the sub-theme of pace in terms of slowing down the presentation of scaling to pupils. However, analysis of cycle 2 participant data showed that delivery of scaling needed further adaptation. Vera commented,

22. **Vera.** I thought that 10 was the most bad one and 0 the best. You kinda went quick there.

Therefore a careful consideration of the pace of the delivery became an ongoing focus for adaptation when improving the researcher's SF practice. In addition to this Barton (2015) noted the importance of using a pictorial representation of the scale in situations where a pupil's understanding of verbal explanation is limited or in need of further clarification as was possibly the case for Margie and Vera.

5.5.3. *The use of scaling beyond a one to one context.*

Cycle 1 participant feedback offered insight into how scaling could be used beyond the individual one to one SF sessions. For example,

31. **Margie.** I would have liked to take it away with me so I know what I'm working on.

50. **Amy.** Maybe if I had a copy that would have been better. So I could remind myself of it in-between sessions.

The creation of the systemic theme highlighted the need to link participants to their wider systems when developing their SR skills using a SF approach.

Therefore pupil feedback allowed for a direct modification of SF session scaling delivery in terms of providing cycle 2 participants with their own copy of their scaling work after every session. The implications of this change appeared to be an improvement in pupil ownership of the scaling process. This modification further highlights the need for the SF practitioner to support the pupils' inherent expertise and ability to action a change themselves (Lipchik, 2002). Not providing Margie and Amy with their own scaling sheet may have undermined their efforts at SR development in-between sessions.

5.5.4. *Support for scaling beyond a one to one context.*

Keith's cycle 1 interview feedback helped further modify the idea of support in-between SF sessions,

83. **Keith.** Maybe if you told my teacher (about the scale) and if she was careful about how she told me.

Keith's idea highlighted a modification in terms of utilising teacher support. His feedback helped develop scaling practice in terms of the participants sharing their scale with school staff as a means of supporting their movement up the scale towards their preferred future in-between sessions. A further crucial learning point here was the understanding that this should only be actioned if the individual pupil themselves identified a need for such support and are motivated by it. This relates to Lipchik's (2002) SF theoretical assumption that every client is unique and therefore this idea may not be useful in all SF working contexts.

5.5.5. *Multi-sensory scaling using colour to develop pupil autonomy.*

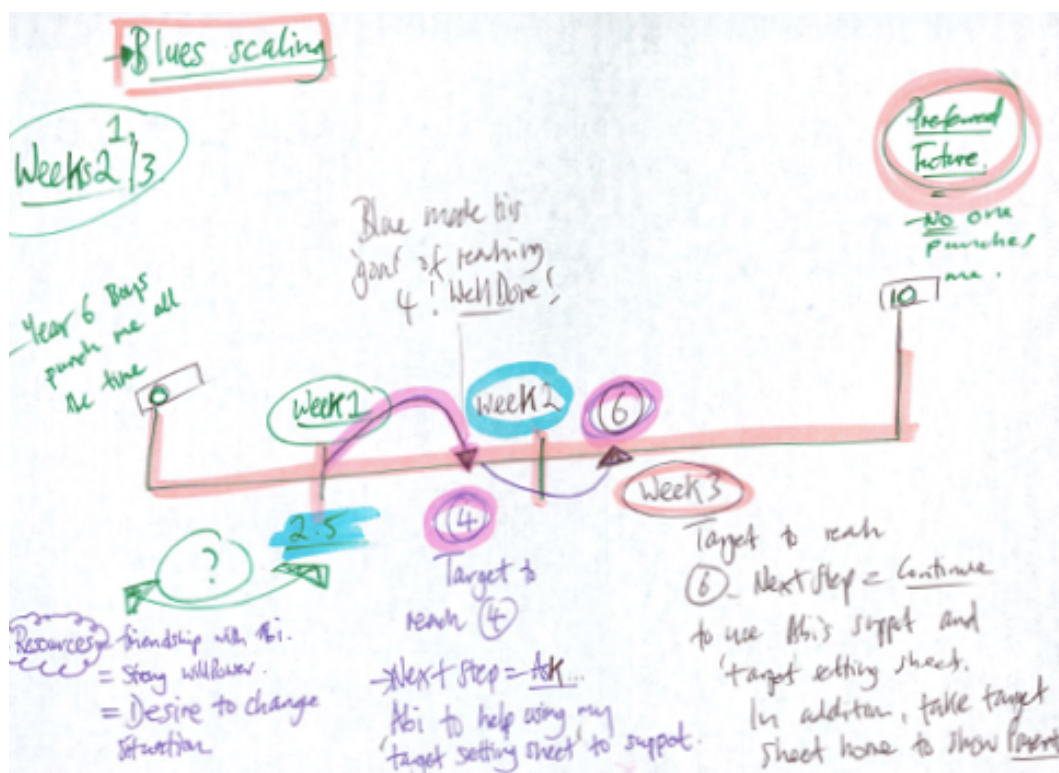
In order to further encourage pupil autonomy and ownership of the process of scaling a multi-sensory element of its delivery could be developed for use in the

researcher's ongoing SF practice. For example, Blue highlighted how colour could be used to improve ease of access to reading his scale,

84. **Blue.** If each weeks scale was a different colour that would be better to ... read it.

Figure 10 highlights a first attempt at the process of modifying the scaling process to include colour.

Figure 10. Scaling modification using colour.



The researcher recognises that Blue's idea to use colour as part his scaling work was possibly unique to his experience of scaling. In future EP practice the constraints of contemporary service delivery could undermine the use of such practice-based evidence when using SF techniques creatively. In Blue's example a different colour was used on his scale for each weekly session. A question is raised here regarding the extent to which the promotion of pupil autonomy could be realised as part of SF intervention.

5.6. Modifications to the use of a break for reflection.

The researcher's modification to this domain of SF practice included encouraging the participants to reflect on their SF work while eating lunch. In hindsight this does not seem to reflect the evidence based SF procedures advocated by De Shazer and Berg (1997) who note the importance of including a break for a reflection as part of a clients successful SF work. In conversations with more experienced EP's it has been cited that a break for reflection is missed out of work with young people due to EP service delivery constraints as referred to in section 5.5. This highlights the need for further research in the area of developing the break for reflection technique when working with young people.

5.7. Modifications to the agreement of next steps.

Atkinson and Amesu (2007) define the agreement of next steps as a process of 'active change' where co-constructed decisions are put into practice. In the context of this study specific areas of SR change were identified by the participants. Atkinson and Amesu (2007) note that in terms of setting and achieving targets the young person should make a public commitment to change that is supported by the adults and/or peers around them.

5.7.1. Examples and critique of modifications based on cycle 1 learning.

A key theme emerged from cycle 1 learning was the need to develop practice in the area of more effectively supporting the participants actioning their own next steps. This was to encourage an atmosphere of ownership, collaboration and co-construction of goals. Central to this was the need to continue to remind the young person that a SF approach recognises that he or she is the expert in their own life. For example,

54. **Amy.** Well, after a while I thought to myself that just the fact that I was trying to concentrate made it easier [pause] I mean once I was able to relax and realise just how good at it I was.

Lipchik's (2002) theoretical assumption again reminds of the importance of reinforcing the notion of client inherent strengths and expertise to remedy their situations.

5.7.2. Support structures for actioning next-steps.

Another key theme included the need to modify SF practice in cycle 2 in order to identify and carefully co-construct the types and levels of support beyond one to one sessions that each unique young person required in order to be able to achieve their SR targets. For example interview data suggested that Amy, Keith and Margie all would have appreciated the support of their teachers when carrying out their targets in-between sessions. The following transcript extracts illustrate this,

70. **Amy.** I would have liked my teachers to have noticed. But I wouldn't be that happy with you telling anyone else.

83. **Margie.** My teacher could have asked me at the end of the day about whether or not I made my target.

83. **Keith.** Maybe if you told my teacher and if she was careful about how she told me.

Margie went one step into further possibilities than this when she identified her need to run a feedback session with her french teacher, parent and school inclusion manager on completion of her three SF sessions. This was probably a key motivating factor in terms of her working towards SR change. SF practice was therefore further modified to include asking cycle 2 participants if they also would like to feedback their successes to other people.

Franklin et al (2008) incorporated teachers in their SF study. This involved training teachers to encourage more cooperative intervention strategies such as SF consultation. Teachers also worked with the researchers on specific SR interventions with students. Franklin et al (2008) noted the importance of training school staff in SF approaches in order to promote more cohesive and cooperative student-teacher interactions. This study relates to Amy, Margie and Keith's idea of linking their SF work with their class teachers. Further adaptations to practice could therefore involve recognising the importance of involvement of teachers when supporting pupils' SR targets within the school system.

This modification of teacher support was further developed with Blue using a SF target setting tool. This was created in response to pupil feedback noted above and Franklin et al's (2008) previous research finding to use teachers as part of SF working. In order to make Blue's SF work in-between sessions more con-

crete and observable he was motivated to use the SF target setting tool as represented in Figure 11 below. He relied on his classmates and teacher's support whilst attempting his SR work. Figure 11 illustrates how Blue's target setting helped him utilise his SF learning during his school day.

Figure 11. Copy of Blue's SF target setting sheet.

Target Setting

Below is a target chart that can be placed on the child's or the teacher's desk and completed daily. A maximum teacher/pupil score of 15 is possible each week. The target may be to achieve a pupil/teacher score of 9 or 12 for the week. It is important that the child also scores each day and their views are seen as valued and important. The differences between the child's and teacher's score can be discussed.

Target area: <i>Walk Away From confrontation</i>										
	Weds		Thurs		Friday		Monday		Tuesday	
Score:	1	1	1	0	2	1	2	2	3	3

I responded with comment rather than a punch. 1 *NO response.* 2 *Abi helped me move away from trouble.* 3

Teacher Comments: = Pencil
Worked really hard on target. His good friend Abi helped him not react on Tuesday. Well done! :)

Child comments: = Pen
Abi helped me stay out of trouble.

Despite the success of using this method with Blue, he commented,

52. **Blue.** It was hard doing targets like at first but when you... I gave my teacher the solution behaviour chart we talked about... it was easier as it reminded me to do it. After that no really annoyed me any more. It was hard at first giving it to my teacher but having you talk it with her and me helped. Although some of my friends laughed at me. But I was not bothered. At least not too much. Maybe it would have been better to ask Abi to help me score my target sheet as then I wouldn't of felt stupid with my friends. That would have been better.

Blue's feedback allowed further augmentation of practice in terms of actioning pupil autonomy. It is apparent from his feedback that this had not been fully achieved during his SF work as underlined in extract 52.

Jin reiterated Blue's point when she referred to how comfortable she felt relying on peer rather than teacher support.

100. **Jin.** I have so many teachers it would be hard. Maybe better to rely on friends for that one.

This highlighted the need to encourage pupil autonomy, expertise and ownership of their SF 'goals'. When working as a SF practitioner the researcher notes Lipchik's assumption that young people have their own inherent strengths. The SF practitioner should work to encourage the activation of these resources such as peer support as described by Blue and Jin.

5.7.3. Parental support adaptations.

Jake's motivation for working hard to develop his SR included linking his passion for boxing to parental support. Thus utilising a resource he already had in tandem with this support network that was easy to access at home. This supported the development of his concentration levels when writing at school.

Jake's feedback reaffirmed the importance of listening to all pupils' ideas and acting on them to encourage motivation for SR change.

73. **Jake.** My dad loves boxing and my target was to watch the video of my fight over again and think of and note down powerful words to use in my writing. It was more fun doing this with someone that I feel calm with and who makes me feel relaxed.

The literature review highlighted studies that utilised a family therapeutic approach to SF working, for example, Corcoran and Stephenson (2000), Window et al (2004) and Corcoran (2006). However these studies do not appear to validate the idea of pupil feedback to parents as mentioned by Jake. This points to need for further research in this specific area for the development of next steps.

5.7.4. Co-construction of next steps modifications.

Adaptations to this area included cycle 2 work with Vera related to collaborative goal setting. Listening to her ideas and acting on them together enabled her to develop her own SR. For example, it was evident that she had the resources to make the changes she desired happen but needed further support and encouragement to build appropriate outcomes. Vera's data highlights this point,

48. **Vera.** It was unexpected that we worked together and came up with the idea of meeting with SENCo ... I mean you and me. That changed everything. I liked the way we just went and spoke with her right away.

Learning from cycle 1 utilising the TA sub-themes of collaboration and support facilitated this adaptation to SF practice. Also of importance here was a consideration of the new SEN Code of Practice which binds in government legislation the concept and practice of supporting all pupils' co-construction of aspirations and outcomes with relevant educational professionals (Children and Families Act, 2014).

5.8. *Evaluation of methodology.*

This section will evaluate the methodology and the processes involved in the two cycles of action research.

5.8.1. *Questioning the validity of this action research study.*

Conducting two cycles of self-study AR was an important process that took time. The learning that was achieved confirmed the utility of AR as a methodology to develop SF practice within a school environment. This AR study could however be criticised for bias because it necessarily involves the researcher analysing their own solution-focused practice. Such a criticism however implies that there is a neutral, or value free, point from which 'proper' research can be actioned (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992). The researcher posits that this is not possible. The researcher agrees with Zuber-Skerritt (1992) who noted, "There is no objective knowledge of reality... reality can only be known through our constructions which are subject to constant revision; we do not have direct access to an interpretation-free reality" (p. 56). This action researcher suggests that 'a re-

searcher' brings their own biases to the research designs they create when attempting to understand and describe a particular environment. For example, this researcher's biases influenced the need to develop SF practice.

AR is sometimes criticised because it appears to lack the rigour of other methodologies (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). However to counter these criticisms, McNiff and Whitehead (2011) posit that action research methodologies transform educational research into an integral part of educational practice, thereby improving the chances of the outcomes being relevant to the practice of those working in education itself.

McNiff and Whitehead (2011) also refer to the methodology of AR as being more 'realistic' than many other research methodologies because it is based at the local level where the participants involved are fully aware of, and able to talk about, their 'real' issues. AR requires the involvement of the individuals who normally function as the subjects being researched. The success of AR requires active discussions with these people and involves bringing the participants and their ideas into the design of the study (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

However as mentioned above AR is not appreciated by all. It appears to challenge the 'expert' attitude of academic educational researchers. It may also question the above mentioned researchers notion of participatory control and therefore the possible devaluation of participant importance and empowerment (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). According to William Whyte the researcher must be "willing to relinquish the unilateral control that the professional researcher has traditionally maintained over the research process" (Whyte, 1990, p. 241).

5.8.2. *Individual one to one session validity.*

This AR methodology incorporated individual SF sessions in its design. Literature searching identified seven previous studies that somewhat successfully utilised a one to one SF session approach. The findings from these studies as outlined in sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.6 in Chapter 2 validated the use of SF approach for the purposes of this research project. The above mentioned literature provided an evidence base for using SF approaches to support the develop-

ment of Year 6 and 7 pupils' SR. Stobie et al (2005) conducted a survey via the Email discussion lists for the UK Education and Research communities (EP-NET) investigating the use of the six core SFBT components in UK EP practice. 31 EP's responded and feedback suggested that these EPs varied their practical use of SFBT mostly within in a one to one direct context. This strengthened the case for this researcher using SF approaches in a one to one setting.

The literature review evaluated ten studies that incorporated a group approach to SF working. Findings from the majority of these studies suggested that working as a group using SF techniques was both a valid and viable approach. Additionally, Ross and Scott (1985) explored the efficacy differences between one to one and group approaches to therapeutic intervention. They found almost no notable differences in the outcome of the interventions. However they concluded that group work was superior in terms of its cost effectiveness and recommended group working as best-practice.

A participant from cycle 1 fed-back that she would have appreciated working in a group situation in order that Drama could be used to support her use of the miracle question. She noted,

55. **Margie.** Drama could work in a group but would a bit weird just with two people.

On reflection this research could also have been conducted as a group-based intervention. This idea was considered during the initial design phase but was not pursued for a number of reasons. These included the timetabling of individual sessions being more feasible and that the majority of EP work with pupils that this researcher has thus far experienced has been carried out in a one to one context. In addition to this the idea that participants felt more comfortable expressing their SR challenges confirmed the use of one to one contexts other than working in a group situation.

5.8.3. *Validity of the interview process.*

Participant interviews took place directly after each participant's final SF session. The interviews set out to encourage the values of freedom of expression,

collaboration and participation in relation to providing critical feedback of the SF sessions. All participants were able and willing to offer verbal responses related to the researcher's questioning that were linked to the idea of developing the researcher's SF practice. Audio recorded pupil feedback was transcribed and then destroyed. This section will critically evaluate the processes involved during the interviews.

5.8.4. *Challenges that were faced throughout the interviewing process.*

Factors linked to the schools' environmental issues possibly impacted on the data gathered. Participant feedback at times seemed rushed. On occasion this led to the use of too fast paced leading questions related to the appropriation of data needed to answer the research question. For example, time constraints meant that Vera was only able to offer 20 minutes of interview time to the researcher during her busy secondary school day. Additionally, interviewing in relatively noisy rooms may have limited the quality of interview feedback. One possible implication of this is that the pupils may have felt distracted.

Roulston, deMarrais and Lewis (2003) noted the importance of the interviewer utilising appropriate probes, question clarification opportunities and follow-up questioning to ensure that the interview related to the research question. Through the process of TA, cycle 1 participant feedback resulted in the creation of the questioning sub-theme primarily used to augment SF practice. This questioning sub-theme was also useful when reviewing interview technique and discovering that open questions could lead to greater clarification and detail in terms of pupil interview feedback. Probes and open questioning were used effectively during Margie's interview. For example the use of probes and Socratic questions such as, "Tell me more", "What else?" and "What was it like to talk about positives?" resulted in richer data, whereas closed or didactic questions used during Vera's interview such as, "Did you find anything difficult?" did not appear to promote free-flowing feedback.

From an axiological (Mertens, 2005) perspective possible elements such as the researcher's prejudices including cultural bias, gender stereotyping, verbal acu-

ity and his moods impacting on possible positive or negative atmospheres may well have influenced participant interview feedback.

5.8.5. *Ethical considerations and researcher in a position of power.*

Gomm (2004) describes 'demand characteristics' as relating to interviewee's responses that are influenced by what she or he thinks the situation requires. Thus it is necessary for the researcher to consider whether or not the pupils were being 'genuine' or if they were effected by the power constructs of the situation. The purpose was made clear at the beginning of each individual interview with the intention of putting the interviewee at ease.

According to McNiff and Whitehead (2011) considerable skill and goodwill is needed to avoid possible relationships of control and self-promotion resulting in unbalanced power relationships between the researcher and those researched. As an action researcher the aim was to promote as equal as possible interactions as well as the concept of power-sharing. Power-sharing may have taken place at times when the researcher and participant perceived the other as powerful and the participants were therefore able to speak for themselves (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). The intention of this AR design was to promote feelings of participant empowerment in terms of the students providing feedback to develop SF practice. The researcher attempted this by establishing an agreement with the participants that the interview conversations would focus on the premise of developing SF practice. A variety of sometimes neglected power characteristics that have been noted by previous researchers include further illustrations of possible limitations of the attempts to share power throughout the interview process (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005). The interview itself is unbalanced because the interviewer may have considerable competence and defines the interview situation (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005). Additionally the interviewer initiates and controls the conversation in regards to topic, questions and also brings the interview to a close. Therefore within these contexts the interviews did not appear to promote dominance-free dialogue between equal partners (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005). Also the interview majorly is mainly a one-way dialogue. The interview served the researcher's needs in terms of providing data for further analysis and to develop SF practice. Finally, the interviewer's monopoly of 'top-

down' data interpretation meant that participants were not involved after the point of interview when interpreting their data using Thematic Analysis (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005).

5.8.6. *Sample homogeneity.*

The process of selecting a small homogeneous group of participants for a research project is recommended for qualitative research (Gomm, 2004). Homogeneous sampling is used when the goal of a study is to understand and describe a particular group in detail. Homogeneity was somewhat reflected in the choosing of Year 6 and 7 pupils throughout both AR cycles as they were of a similar age group.

5.8.7. *Audit trail, rigour and a consideration of direct-application.*

The AR's audit trail should evidence the research process and demonstrate credibility, integrity, competence and trustworthiness (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The step-by-step outline of the two TA cycles reported in Chapter 4 was a method of demonstrating transparency and rigour in this way. Participants' verbatim feedback strengthened the face-validity and credibility of this research (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). However, a limitation was that member-checks or respondent- validation were not used as a method to validate participants' responses to a researcher's conclusions about them.

Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) refer to the idea of direct-application which postulates that the credibility of any research is measured by the way in which practitioners use the knowledge generated by the research in their professional practice. Practitioners become their own critics of their research findings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The aim of this study was to formulate useful findings and make improvements to SF practice. Details of how this was achieved were discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

5.8.8. *Thematic Analysis validity.*

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a method of presenting complex data sets intelligibly

where emerging themes become categories for analysis. Braun and Clarke's method of (2006) TA can be used within different theoretical frameworks such as SF approaches and AR. This point justified the use of TA within the overall structure of action research when using SF techniques. Braun & Clarke (2006) note that, TA as a method of data analysis can also function between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism as characterised by the critical realist theoretical position of this study.

TA was driven by the researcher's 'top-down' theoretical or analytic interests and desire to develop SF practice. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that this form of TA is somewhat limited as it provides a less rich description of the overall data set because it focuses only on a particular aspect of it. The latent coding process involved recognising an important idea that captured the qualitative richness of the phenomenon under investigation. Although presented as a linear, step-by-step procedure the process of TA was an iterative and reflexive process (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This study's latent level TA approach attempted to search beyond the semantic content of the data in order to interpret it and build themes relevant to the development of SF practice.

5.8.9. *Evaluation of TA phases (1-5).*

Phase 1.

Data was collected and transcribed by the researcher. Reading of the data was undertaken a number of times before coding began. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the researcher should continue to immerse themselves in their data set when conducting Phase 1 of Thematic Analysis. However they also posit that this should not continue too far as it may be counter productive to the efficiency of the research.

Phase 2.

In both AR cycles highlighters or coloured pens were used to indicate patterns. A possible limitation of cycle 1 analysis was that initial ideas and codes were assessed and organised into meaningful groups too soon. Sections of data were cut up and stuck together which limited the option of critiquing choices and moving them around between ideas. 'Post-it' notes were used to identify seg-

ments of data in cycle 2 which allowed for a more fluid construction of ideas and codes. Pertinent code-book extracts were represented as tables.

Due to the nature of this study, data was mostly coded and themes identified in the data by one person and the analysis then discussed with a supervisor. This process allowed for consistency in the method but did not always allow multiple perspectives from a variety of people with differing expertise.

Phase 3.

Mind-maps and tables were used to create a collection of candidate themes and sub-themes matched to individual codes. As mentioned in section 4.2.2.3. re-coding verified and augmented initial codes. Construct validity was adhered to by acknowledging critical-friends perspectives in terms of the validity and frequency of the codes that were initially constructed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 4.

Cycle 1 data was reviewed during this phase. The extent to which there were clear and identifiable distinctions between themes as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) was questionable. Conversely, during cycle 2 analysis Phase 5 was not approached until these distinctions between themes were established.

Re-coding of the data set did not take place during cycle 1 as part of Phase 4. In cycle 2 re-coding was undertaken within this phase and resulted in the establishment of obvious distinctions between themes and possibly a more coherent final thematic map (see Table 9).

Phase 5.

Phase 5 involved identifying the final thematic map for both TA cycles. Both maps allowed the researcher to develop SF practice for use in subsequent AR cycles. In addition to this, Braun and Clarke's (2006) advice was followed in testing the themes and sub-themes to see whether or not their scope and content could be described in a couple of sentences. This was actioned in Chapter 4.

5.8.10. *Implications of using qualitative approaches to validity.*

The quality of practice-base research can be scrutinised using a range of qualitative criteria and standards. AR's such as McNiff and Whitehead (2011) formulated new ideas on how to demonstrate validity in research. Some of these methods were adhered to in this study as noted in section 3.5.7. In order to demonstrate catalytic validity research would need to enable its participants to move towards new and more productive positions (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Participant feedback data in this research highlighted that the SF work the pupils experienced as part of this design met this criteria during the interview phase. Whether or not these new and productive positions the pupils found themselves in were sustainable and continued on is not known within the scope this research.

To accomplish ironic validity the researcher should not interpret data simplistically but rather investigate underlying assumptions and meanings (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Utilising a latent approach to Thematic Analysis allowed the researcher to accomplish this when developing SF practice.

Rhizomatic validity refers to the interactive validity of qualitative research and the possible wider impact a study may have had on those participating. The collaborative approach of this study focused on the relationships built between the researcher and participants through both AR cycles. This shows alignment with de Shazer's (1985) SF philosophical stance that the creativity of a particular solution should not only depend on the professional or on the pupil individually, but from the relationship between the two.

5.9. *Feedback of study.*

Although this research was focused on developing the researcher's SF practice there were a number of stakeholders who may have benefitted from being involved this research. These stakeholders are outlined below.

5.9.1. *To pupils, parents and school.*

The pupils were presented with a letter thanking them for their participation. These were written in the style of a therapeutic-letter designed not only thank pupils for their involvement but also to remind them of their hard work and successes related to their individual SF sessions. It was agreed that the pupils themselves would share their letters with whomever they desired. They also had the opportunity to ask any further questions related to their experiences. Four out of eight pupils fed-back to parents and the school SENCo so that SF work might continue at school and home.

5.9.2. *To Educational Psychology Service and University of East London (UEL) EP Trainees and faculty members.*

Findings were fed-back to the researcher's Educational Psychology Service as part of a team meeting in the summer term 2016 and will also be fed-back to UEL trainee's and faculty members as part of Year 3 UEL research presentations in July 2016. The researcher hoped to encourage his colleagues to use SF techniques more often and creatively in their practice.

5.10. *The relevance and implications of this work for Educational Psychologists.*

The relevance of this work is that it potentially offers useful insights for Educational Psychologists into using SF techniques in the specific area of developing young peoples' self-regulation. This has implications for the researcher himself as a SF practitioner and future EP as well as for the wider EP community.

5.10.1. *Implications for this researcher.*

This researcher believes his professional practice has benefitted considerably from undertaking this research. To take note of the ongoing learning insights which occurred and are occurring as a result of this research and offer an example of SF working modified as a direct result of this AR project a vignette will be given from the researcher's current EP practice. This will further illustrate

how SF adaptations learned during this study have influenced the researcher's post research SF practice.

The casework vignette involved working with a Year 7 female pupil whose name has been anonymised for reasons of confidentiality. She will be referred to as pupil K and has a strong friendship group and attends extra curricula clubs at school. She enjoys listening to music and video editing using her iPad. During our recent SF work the following goal was highlighted by pupil K regarding her desire to action a self-regulatory change:

To develop my self-esteem in order to contribute more to classroom discussion and proactively ask for teacher support.

During this SF work pupil K reflected on her social and emotional resources. She was asked to think of an area of school life where she might like to develop her self-regulation skills as described above. Pupil K mentioned that she would like to improve the frequency of her contribution towards classroom discussion. She noted that this may help her develop confidence at school. Pupil K and this researcher engaged in a target setting scaling activity to support her goal. On completion of this scaling task and with support she fed-back her ideas to her mother, teacher and the school SENCo. Pupil K identified that she would therefore require peer support and the opportunity to move seat in maths class in order to achieve her goal. With pupil K's permission her scaling work was passed over to school staff who continued to support her attempts to achieve her self-regulation goal.

This vignette points to the learning from this AR study which has impacted on and improved this researcher's ongoing EP practice when using a SF approach for pupil SR development in day to day EP work.

5.10.2. *Implications for the wider Educational Psychology community.*

The findings and learning resulting from this AR project could also be of benefit to the wider EP community. When delivering feedback of this study to the researcher's Educational Psychology Service, during a professional development team day, it became apparent that other EPs appeared interested in the learn-

ing gained from the presentation of this AR project to enhance their own solution-focused practice. Some examples are: the elements related to how the researcher dealt with wording of the MQ; the fact that the young people took away an example of their scaling work for ongoing goal oriented self-appraisal and also the researcher's findings related to the importance of maintaining a balance of power between the facilitator and the student.

This researcher will endeavour to create further opportunities to offer similar and ongoing professional development training to other Educational Psychology Services when working as a qualified EP with aim of continuing the process of SF technique modification with enhanced subtlety in analysis and reflection on possible further SF developments.

This action research project has attempted to add to the evidence-base related to SF learning and practice development as well as providing EPs with an example of how practice-based development could be achieved using the methodology of AR.

5.11. Conclusions.

This first attempt at developing solution-focused practice using action research enhanced this researcher's skills. It has also awakened the researcher's learning to the need of further and continuing professional development in this field of practice and study. Another important leaning point was the combination and utilisation of practice-based evidence in conjunction with evidence-based practice when working as an educational psychologist.

This study explored how the use of SF techniques could be adapted when working with Year 6 and 7 pupils' self-regulation development. There were two cycles of data collection actioned both during and after eight pupils individual SF sessions. The aim when operating as an action researcher was to examine SF practice and improve ways of functioning as an Educational Psychologist.

The Year 6 and 7 pupils who participated in this research were collaborators and were seen as such and their views were acknowledged and learnt from

through most of the process. The research question identified first in Chapter 1 related to the development of SF skills. It asked, How can I use first person AR to develop my SF practice in collaboration with Year 6 and 7 pupils when discussing their behavioural SR at school?

Having completed this research this researcher is now more competent and confident in the use of solution-focused approaches to support young peoples' self-regulation development. The following modifications to SF practice resulting from this AR study are summarised in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Key modifications to the core components of SFBT.

SF core component	Key modifications to SF practice
<i>Resource activation</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage motivation and pupil autonomy by identifying and utilising resources across wider systems beyond the school setting. 2. The use of humour and games to build rapport, a more relaxed atmosphere and shared laughter. 3. Spending time investigating the emotional connections to the young person's resources. 4. The need to value, learn from and utilise each young person's unique set of interpersonal capacities. 5. Incorporate multi-sensory methods of resource activation utilising both verbal and non-verbal methods of SR discovery. 6. Share SF practitioner resources and their own SR struggles with the pupil to encourage a balance of power as well as an atmosphere of trust and learning. 7. The importance of pupil ownership of SF work. 8. Encourage creative and lateral thinking. 9. Be mindful of the pace of a individual session. Consider the idea of staying with what's working, not rushing and encouraging a climate of calmness, exploration and trust. 10. Less facilitator interpretation and more active listening to each pupil's SR story.

SF core component	Key modifications to SF practice
Goal setting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss concrete and observable methods of using the young person's resources in novel areas of SR development. 2. Focus dialogue on positives and resources, rather than negatives when discussing specific areas of SR improvement. 3. Consider practitioner pace of delivery and ensure pupil comprehension of SF techniques. 4. Pupil understanding of the MQ is crucial. Ensure careful explanation of a MQ. Make sure the young person's goals are their own. 5. Utilise Leggett's (2009) MQ adaptation: "Imagine that tomorrow was a perfect day and the problem you are having today was gone. What would that perfect day look like?" 6. Be mindful of cultural implications when using the word 'miracle'. 7. The use of visualisation techniques when delivering MQ. For example, closing one's eyes to better imagine future possibilities and goals. 8. The young person may be aided by drawing and illustrating their preferred future arising from the MQ. 9. Encouraging pupil autonomy. The need to facilitate the independence or freedom of the young person's expression and goal setting actions. 10. The need for the young person to recognise and take ownership of their expertise and motivation for self-regulation development. 11. Putting the young person's expertise at the forefront of any self-regulation change they wish to make in their lives. 12. Co-construct Specific Measurable and Realistic Targets (SMART).
Exception finding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilise peer group support. Friends as positive coping mechanisms and useful for supporting self-regulation target setting. 2. The positive impact and benefits of SF work between friends. 3. The pupil could utilise their 'out of school' positive resources when locating exceptions to self-regulation issues they are having within school. 4. Use of SF questioning to explore exceptions to SR challenges: "When are the times that it doesn't happen?", "When are the times it doesn't last as long?", "When are the times that you feel better?", "When are the times that it bothers you not as much?" and "When do you resist the urge to...?".

Scaling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure clarity and pupil understanding of scaling activity. 2. Ensure pupil ownership and motivation to engage with scaling. 3. Adapt scaling to suit needs of the pupil. For example, use of colour, numbers, words and pictures. 4. The use of scaling beyond a one to one context. 'Take Away' scale to provide the pupil with their own copy of their scaling work after a session. The implication of this change appeared to be an improvement in pupil ownership of the scaling process. 5. Locate appropriate support for scaling beyond a one to one context. 6. A further crucial learning point here was the understanding that this should only be actioned if the individual pupil identified a need for such support.
Agreement of next-steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The need to encourage the pupil's autonomy and ownership of their SF goals by making sure goals are their own. 2. Locate appropriate support mechanisms a pupil requires to action SMART such as peer support, school staff and parent support. 3. Consider the pupil's motivating and ownership factors when considering school staff, parent and peer support on the young person's terms. 4. The young person could make a public commitment to self-regulation change that is supported by the adults and/or peers around them. The use of a feedback meeting. 5. Set up method of monitoring and reviewing next-steps actioning in collaboration with the pupil's chosen method/s. For example, SF target sheet.

This practice-based research provided opportunities to contribute to new solution-focused practices and 'living theories'. It also provided this researcher with new and valuable practitioner reflection and modification opportunities. This researcher is at beginning of his practice in terms of being a SF practitioner and his skills will need further development and analysis over the coming years when working as an EP. The researcher also considers that SF practice modification should be a fluid and ongoing process transcending the learning bounded in cycles 1 and 2 as was in this AR project.

To conclude, the researcher proposes that SF professional practice can be developed using the methodology of action research. In this researcher's case it required the practitioner himself to adopt more creative, flexible and fluid approaches when using the core comments of SFBT in order to enable young people to create and work towards their SR futures from new more positive perspectives.

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Appendices.

Appendix A. Summary of systematic literature searching.

Appendix B. Head Teacher Information Sheet and consent form.

Appendix C. Parents/carers and pupil Information Sheet and consent form.

Appendix D. UEL ethical approval form.

Appendix E. Research diary entry.

Appendix F. Margie's data transcript.

Appendix G. Margie's code-book continued.

Appendix H. 'Post-it' note example of initial theme grouping.

Appendix I. Initial thematic map.

Appendix J. Copy of the final thank you letter sent to all the participants.

Appendix A. Summary of systematic literature searching.

Search date/s	June-Oct 2015
EBSCO Host Boolean search terms.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SFBT AND SR. Result (R)=323 Articles included (AI)= 10 2. SFBT AND emotional-regulation. Result = 311 AI = 0 3. SFBT AND behaviour/behavior R = 10 AI = 1 4. SFBT AND behaviour/behavior regulation R = 27 AI = 1 5. SFBT AND externalising behaviour/behavior_R=91 AI= 0 6. SFBT AND aggressive behaviour OR oppositional behaviour OR defiance OR defiant behaviour R=434 AI = 0 7. SFBT AND at risk students R = 3 AI = 0 8. SFBT AND Intervention R = 7 AI = 0 9. SFBT AND Programme R = 5 AI = 0 10. SFBT AND Action Research R= 2 AI = 0 11. SF Approaches AND behaviour R = 41 AI= 1 12. Children's Perceptions AND SF therapy R= 5 AI = 1 13. Solution oriented therapy AND behaviour R = 3 AI = 0 14. Solution oriented brief therapy R = 38 AI = 0 15. Solution oriented brief therapy AND behaviour R=15 AI= 0 16. Solution oriented approaches AND behaviour R=8 AI= 0
EBSCO Host snowball searches	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solution Focused approach. R= 8 AI = 0 2. SF action research R = 2 AI = 1

Search date/s	June-Oct 2015
Scopus Boolean search terms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SFBT AND Behaviour Total result = 28 AI = 0 2. SFBT AND Behaviour regulation No results 3. SFBT AND externalising behaviour_No results 4. SFBT AND aggressive behaviour OR oppositional behaviour OR defiance OR defiant behaviour_No results 5. SFBT AND at risk students R= 4 AI = 1 6. SFBT AND Intervention R= 34 AI= 0 7. SFBT AND Programme No results 8. SFBT AND Action Research R = 3 AI = 0 9. SF Approaches AND behaviour/behavior R = 65 AI = 2 10. Children's Perceptions AND SF therapy R= 1 AI= 0
Google Searches.	1. SF Approaches to school adolescent behaviour R = 1 AI=1
Additional article	Barton 2015 AI=1
Articles selected	<p>After applying the search criteria outlined in Chapter 2 the total number of articles used N=19</p> <p>One additional article was selected that was not available from searching. Therefore the total number of articles selected was N=20</p>

The EBSCO Host databases searched included: Academic Search Complete; British Education Index; Child Development and Adolescence Studies; Education Abstracts; Education Research Complete; Educational Administration Abstracts; ERIC (Education Resources Information Center); Psych Articles; Psych INFO and the Teacher Reference Centre.

Appendix B. Head Teacher Information Sheet and consent form.

Why is this research being done and who will be involved? My name is Daniel Tully and I am training to become an Educational Psychologist at the University of East London. As part of my training I am looking to undertake a study into how I can improve my own practice when using Solution-focused questions and techniques. The Solution-focused research would involve looking for pupils strengths and applying these to areas of school life they might finding a challenge. It is a proactive approach that aims to help pupils locate and use their strengths to help manage and regulate their own behaviour and skills in their daily lives.

I am interested in asking for feedback on their involvement so that my psychological practice can be developed and improved.

What does the study involve?

1. Four Year 6 children would take part in the research from your school. Two in the spring term 2015 and two in the summer term 2015.
2. Each individual child would then take part in three or four weekly Solution-focused sessions that would last for 35 minutes. The dates of the sessions would be: Session 1- Wednesday 10th June 2015, Session 2- Wednesday 17th June and Session 3- Wednesday 24th June. The pupils would be free to leave the study at any point.
3. After the final session each child would take part in an individual feedback session (no longer than 30 minutes) that would involve them talking about how useful it was using their strengths to problem solve and what they think could be done to improve my own practice.
4. I would then write a letter to the individual children thanking them for their involvement and outlining any successes they may have had during the intervention. This letter would not form part of any data used for the research. The children would also be free to choose whether or not they wished to meet with anyone to share what they thought about the sessions and what they did.

Confidentiality When talking to the children in more detail I will record what they say using an audio recorder, to ensure their thoughts are recorded accurately. What they say will be kept between myself and the child. The only time I would break confidentiality would be if they tell me something that means either themselves or somebody else is in danger. When I have gathered all the children's thoughts about the intervention I will write about what I found out, and use the information to develop the programme for future use. I will not use their names and I will also make sure that nobody can work out who said what. The children's responses will not be linked to their name, school or any personal details.

For more information on this study please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

Head Teacher Consent Form

Name of school.....

This is the consent form that you need to fill in if you are happy for the children from your school to take part in the research project.

1. I have looked at the information sheet about the project and I understand what it is about:

☐

YES

☐

No (I would like more information)

Signature.....

2. I am happy for the children in my school to participate in the research project, pending permission from the parents and children:

☐

YES

☐

No

Signature.....

3. I accept that the children's responses will be recorded:

☐

YES

☐

No

Signature.....

Thank you.

Appendix C. Parent/carer and pupil Information Sheet and consent form.

Information sheet for Parents/Guardians

Why is this research being done and who will be involved? My name is Daniel Tully and I am training to become an Educational Psychologist at the University of East London. As part of my training I am looking to undertake a study into how I can improve my own practice when using Solution-focused questions and techniques. The Solution-focused research would involve looking for your child's strengths and applying these strengths to areas of school life they maybe finding a challenge. It is a proactive approach that aims to help children locate and use their strengths to help manage and regulate their own behaviour and skills in their daily lives.

I am interested in asking for the children's feedback on their involvement so that my psychological practice can be developed and improved with your child's help.

What does the study involve?

1. Four Year 6 children would take part in the research from your child's school. Two in the spring term 2015 and two in the summer term 2015.
2. Each individual child would then take part in three or four weekly Solution-focused sessions that would last for 35 minutes. The dates of the sessions would be: Session 1- Wednesday 10th June 2015, Session 2- Wednesday 17th June and Session 3- Wednesday 24th June. Your child would be free to leave the study at any point.
3. After the final session each child would take part in an individual feedback session (no longer than 30 minutes) that would involve them talking about how useful it was using their strengths to problem solve and what they think could be done to improve my own practice.
4. I would then write a letter to the individual children thanking them for their involvement and outlining any successes they may have had during the intervention. This letter would not form part of any data used for the research. Your child would also be free to choose whether or not they wished to meet with anyone to share what they thought about the sessions and what they did.

Confidentiality When talking to the children in more detail I will record what they say using an audio recorder, to ensure their thoughts are recorded accurately. What they say will be kept between myself and the child. The only time I would break confidentiality would be if they tell me something that means either themselves or somebody else is in danger. When I have gathered all the children's thoughts about the intervention I will write about what I found out, and use the information to develop the programme for future use. I will not use their names and I will also make sure that nobody can work out who said what. The children's responses will not be linked to their name, school or any personal details.

For more information on this study please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

Consent form for parent/carer

Child's name.....

This is the consent form that you need to fill in if you are happy for your child to take part in the research project.

1. I have looked at the information sheet about the project and I understand what it is about:

☐

YES

☐

No (I would like more information)

Signature.....

2. I am happy for my child to participate in the research project:

☐

YES

☐

No

Signature.....

3. I am happy for my child's responses to be recorded:

☐☐

No

Signature.....

Thank you.

Information Sheet for Pupil/Student

Hello. My name is Daniel Tully. I am an apprentice Educational Psychologist who is studying how to help young people learn and be more successful in school, especially during the transition year.

The programme would help you to look for solutions for things you might be finding difficult at school. We could talk about some of your strengths to help you do this.

I am interested in asking for your feedback about our chats so you can help me develop my skills as an apprentice psychologist.

What does the study involve?

1. Four students would take part in the study from your year group.
2. If you would like to take part you would need to sign a consent form. You would be free to leave the study at any time once it begins.
3. You would then take part in three weekly sessions at school that would last for 35 minutes each. The sessions would involve talking about what your strengths and skills are as well as thinking about school life.
4. Whatever you say would be kept between you and me, or confidential. The only time I would have to speak to anyone else would be if you tell me something that means yourself or someone else is in danger.
5. When the sessions finish I would then ask you to talk about whether or not they helped you at school. This could be just you and me or maybe you might like to invite your teacher, parents or friends along too. I would also ask you to think about what could be done to improve the sessions. I would record the conversations to help me remember what has been said.
6. I would then write you a letter thanking you for your involvement and outlining any successes you may have had. If you wanted to, you could of course share this letter with your parents, friends and teachers.

What will happen afterwards?

When I have talked to all the young people I will write about what I find out, but I won't use anyone's real name and I will make sure that no one could work out what you have said. The conversations that are recorded will be password protected on my computer so they are safe. My university teacher will be able to read parts of our conversations, but would not know the names of any young people.

If you would like to be part of my study please tick the boxes on the next page.

Thank you very much.

Consent form for Pupil/Student

My name is..... I am in Year.....

1. I understand what Daniel's project is about:

☐

YES

☐

No (I would like more information)

Signature.....

2. I would like to take part in the project and tell Daniel what I thought about it:

☐

YES

☐

No

Signature.....

3. I am happy for Daniel to record what I say so that he can remember what I tell him:

☐

YES

☐

No

Signature.....

Appendix D. UEL ethical approval form.

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

SUPERVISOR: Miles Thomas

REVIEWER: Davide Rivolta

STUDENT: Daniel Tully

Title of proposed study: Using action research to explore and develop my solution-focused practice when running a solution-focused intervention for Year 6 and 7 children who are experiencing difficulties with behaviour. (please note that this title was changed through the official UEL route).

Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

DECISION (*Delete as necessary*):

***APPROVED**

APPROVED: Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.

APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

Minor amendments required (*for reviewer*):

Major amendments required (*for reviewer*):

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments (*for students*):

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name (*Typed name to act as signature*): DANIEL TULLY

Student number: 1014153

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEARCHER *(for reviewer)*

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

☐

HIGH

☐

MEDIUM

☐

LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):

Reviewer *(Typed name to act as signature):* Davide Rivolta

Date: 26/01/2015

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (moderator of School ethics approvals)

PLEASE NOTE:

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, travel approval from UEL (not the School of Psychology) must be gained if a researcher intends to travel overseas to collect data, even if this involves the researcher travelling to his/her home country to conduct the research. Application details can be found here: <http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ethics/fieldwork/>

Appendix E. Research diary entry.

- ### Diary Reflections #2 (14/3/2015)

 - Sharing Positives → How might this be received by participants?
 - cheery / fun / useful & self-affirming... Should Positive Sharing be only client & SF result led?
 - SFBT Structure: Don't forget to include a 'Break for Reflection'. How could this be actioned? =
 - = Drawing of something from the session / quiet reflection with child yps 'own' summarisation of work done
 - Qc / Young Person 'own' articulation of how the session went & how 'goals' are moving for them...
- - Body Language awareness (ie) SOLER (Egan, 1978) S - Square (facing them) O - Open posture L - Lean E - Eye contact R - Relax
 - Am I relaxed? or waiting data to be collected? - Reflect on this prior to session commencement.
- - During discussion →
 - My NOT knowing the "PROBLEM" - can give client POWER to shape conversation in their own way & take ownership.
- - make sure (yp's) preferred future is 'theirs' and not mine!
 - use a mix to validate this to check out if they are happy with it.

Appendix F. Margie's data transcript.

Qualitative Interview with Margie (Year 7). 34 mins 12 sec continued from main body.

1. I: Hello, testing 1, 2, 3 this is the first interview in SP High School with Ma and Interviewer. We've had three sessions together, oh crikey, and this our fourth and so that you can give me some feedback about how the sessions went. We've been talking about things that are your strengths and trying to use those strengths at school at times when you find behaving a bit challenging or tricky. Is that OK?
2. P: Yeah.
3. I: Remember you've got the complete freedom to say what you want. (Dan get's up to move the door as Year 11's passing by very loudly).
4. P: Yeah I know that.
5. I: Let's begin. So, can you tell me what you think about the sessions we've had?
6. P: They were good. Pause...
7. I: Can you tell me more about that?
8. P: Um, like fun and good. Pause, um um.
9. I: What else?
10. P: I enjoyed it. Pause.
11. I: What did you enjoy?
12. P: Talking. Yes I enjoyed talking. Because it helped me improve my French learning. As this was my target.
13. I: Anything else?
14. P: Well I enjoy generally talking about everything, it's a good way to communicate to people around here. I like talking with my friends. During the sessions I've enjoyed talking to you and finding out about interesting things. Which is good.
15. I: Anything else?
16. P: Like I said they were good, like funny actually. You make jokes. Which made it easy to talk. It's not like a boring lesson, and when the teachers keep blabbing on and on.
17. I: Uh. So you like when things are funny? What is it about jokes that you like?
18. P: It makes me relax and talk more so it's not so tense. That's just what I like.
19. I: Um, so it's not too serious?
20. P: Yeah that's it. Good.
21. I: Anything else?
22. P: Um, no that's it.
23. I: Did you enjoy anything about the sessions?
24. P: Um, Yes I did. Can't really think about what I enjoyed. That's difficult. So much. If I was to say what I enjoyed most it would be the perfect picture thing. What's it called?
25. I: Your preferred picture. Talk about that if you wouldn't mind?
26. P: Yes that's it called. Well, I thought about what I what to improve like in French which was my area I decided to tackle. Thinking about it using the 'preferred picture' helped me set a goal that was different than just getting my grade target. It helped me get more involved in French than I used to be. I do get more involved and listen to the teacher. Well now I don't talk when

- my teacher does and ask my friends to stop talking to me. I don't write secret messages on paper to my friends, well I do, but not so much. All this was possible because I thought about my preferred picture. I mean my preferred picture is not to never talk or never write messages because I don't see that as a problem. My teachers do. Ha.
27. P: OK well thanks for sharing that Ma.
 28. I: Anything else?
 29. P: Yeah, like talking about how to improve when using the line thing.
 30. I: Do you mean scale?
 31. P: Yeah that's it. I enjoyed that. Although at first I thought you were talking about dragon scales or weighing scales. I would have liked a bit more discussion about what that was.
 32. I: Did you enjoy anything else about it?
 33. P: Yeah like, going out of lessons because some of them were boring. I looked forward to you writing all I said, I mean word by word, I found that really funny. I mean no one does that, it's unusual and good. No-one ever does that. It's good because let say you are ten years older and you wanted to look back or more importantly when you let me know you're listening. Mostly I feel teachers don't really listen which is sad.
 34. I: OK anything else you enjoyed?
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 36. I: Did you find anything difficult?
 37. P: Not really. Walking up all those stairs.
 38. I: Was it difficult thinking about your strengths?
 39. P: Yeah, I never really thought about that. I just thought about my timetable and that helped me think about what my strengths were as no one really ever asks me that. It was hard but I easily got used to it.
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 41. P: Well it was a bit difficult and I would have liked a bit more time thinking it through actually. I mean the targets I set were fine but maybe a little difficult to get done. It helped having you help me though. I would never set such targets on my own.
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 44. I: If you could improve our sessions what are some of your ideas?
 45. P: Maybe if I could tell to my mother and friends after each session or even my teachers so they know my targets and strengths. Can I meet with some of them after this session and share my letter you will write?
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 48. I: Is talking the best way?

49. P: Taking is the best way for me because writing is hard for me. Drawing is hard too but there's this thing called, 'draw my life' basically you have to draw where you from and other stuff. Um um.
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51. P: No it's, something I found on 'YouTube' which helps people get to know one another better. Like it could work here because let's say in the past you don't really get along with French learning, now you do and you could draw yourself struggling with French then less struggling over time. I mean you could actually see the changes on paper rather than as words you write down which I find hard hard to read and well I think you will keep those and not me. Like I can keep a record by taking a picture or saving it on my iPad.
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53. P: Instead of reading it over and over again I would see it. That would help. But I'm not a great artist.
54. I: Any other ways?
55. P: Not singing. Drama could work in a group but would a bit weird just with two people. You could do an act. One could be maths teacher and others could be students and you could try out your targets in practice. That might help.
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57. P: Still possible but harder. Games might be better.
58. I: Tell me more?
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60. I: What else?
61. P: iPad games like Temple Run. I love Temple Run 1 and 2. I suggest that you play that when you do your sessions, just for a little bit of time.
62. I: Any other games?
63. P: Well only really games like Minecraft or Sims but they cost money and take loads of time.
64. I: What was it like talking about your strengths and skills?
65. P: Well I have to think about as I hadn't really thought about it before. I mean that's what's different about the way you ask me questions. They are new to me. No one asks me it like that before. It was quite difficult but good.
66. I: How was it difficult?
67. P: Well having to have time to think which you allowed sometimes. But I would have liked a bit more time think about it before you talked again.
68. I: Ok, what else?
69. P: Well just that really. Good I don't know.
70. I: What was it like to talk about positives.
71. P: Good because it puts you in a good mood. If you talked about negatives like my friend has the flu. I mean I would just be depressed and wouldn't want to talk at all. So yeah positives opened up the talk and made me feel good and happy.
72. I: Was there anything hard about that?
73. P: Easy and hard. Because you had to think about it really hard. Lets say I was not so good at PE but good at art, you have to really think about it for a

- while. To get to your real strengths and what's behind those skills. I mean like being patient and respecting people which helps with skills.
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75. P: Both because you still have to think about it because you know certain things and others don't and it is good to get this out of me.
76. I: Anything else?
77. P: No that's it?
78. I: What was it like setting targets?
79. P: It was useful because it gives a purpose. Well I mean it help focus me and know that I have to do something from these sessions which is good. Let's say you don't set a target, I don't know, and then I just do it because I don't know what to do. It helps with learning. My targets was not to talk as much with my friends in French. When I am talking I mean in my lesson I remember my target and it helps. Listening more means I pay attention more, when I pay attention more this means I learn more. Which is good, I think.
80. I: Anything else?
81. P: It's like a fun way of motivating people to do it.
82. I: Would you have liked me to let other people know about your targets?
83. P: Yes this would have helped me do them more and made others more aware. My teacher could have asked me at the end of the day about whether or not I made my target and I could then have asked my mum at home. They could have reminded me as I did forget sometimes.
84. I: What was it like experiencing the 'miracle question'? Do you remember what that was?
85. P: Yes it was when you asked me when I went to sleep how would things be different and who would know. Well it was actually pretty fun as well you got to think about a miracle happening and they don't ever happen. Maybe when Jesus was around. It would have been better if it was used more. I mean you only used it once. More miracles questions would have been better. You could have, yes. Um, although if I got better grade in French it wouldn't be because a miracle happened but because I studies hard and stopped talking.
86. I: What was it like using a scale?
87. P: It helped. Like cos if you didn't have numbers you might not know what to improve. It helped to let me know. I like numbers they help me make things clearer. It actually helps you, really good for targets. It also makes you think about what happened in your lesson.
88. I: What else?
89. P: Well I said it really I mean it helped me think about my lesson and whether or not I made my target. But not in a pressured way or anything.
90. I: Anything else?
91. P: No not really.
92. I: Was it explained clearly enough?
93. P: Yes although maybe you could have talked about it some more at the beginning of each session. That would have been better.
94. I: What was it like trying out your targets?
95. P: Difficult at first as I was not used to it. But gradually it became easier an easier as I got used to thinking about them in my French lessons. Like lets say you buy a pair of new high heals and you walk in them and it's really

- hard and your legs go all wobbly and it makes you uncool. After a while and walking in them every day the better you become.
96. I: Anything else?
97. P: Rewards. Like, um, um, lets say you play a game at the beginning you might play for longer if you achieve your targets.
98. I: Could the sessions have taken place anywhere else?
99. P: Um, not a at football stadium, somewhere quiet like the Learning Resource Centre basically the hash tag library with more access to computers.
100. I: Were the session too long short? Tel me about what you think?
101. P: Well basically they were too short I would like them to be at different times throughout the day so I don't have to go to Maths and English. I know that's not possible though, ha. Lunchtime was difficult as I missed my friends but I was happy to come along. Just maybe not a good time.
- 102.I: Did you learn anything about yourself during the sessions?
- 103.P: I learnt that I had more strengths that I thought. And that I can improve myself using my strengths that I didn't know about before. What I could get out of being better at French like if I was to go on a school trip to France um Paris I would more able to ask for things than if I just talked always in my French lessons at school. I could ask about where to find a coffee shop and cakes and other things. So yeah it's good to use your strengths in situations that you wouldn't normally.
- 104.I: Anything else? Where else would your strengths be useful to use?
- 105.P: In other subjects like in science. The girls next to me always talk so I have used my strategies in other lessons which has helped. Good. I would let my teacher know about them more so that I can get more work done and get better grades. Even outside of school like the other day I was in Liddl and I had to stop talking so I could hear what the shopkeeper was saying to me. That was useful.
- 106.I: Did anyone else notice you using your strengths?
- 107.P: My friends as I was more quite and I told them. My teacher mentioned that I had less behaviour points. And my mum she bought me a computer game because she was impressed. She also checks my books and noticed that I did more writing because I was talking less and working more.
- 108.I: How important for you is it that other people notice your strengths?
- 109.P: Not that important. Only those I care about. My main friends, my teachers and my mum. Those I don't care about I don't care. I mean I would like them to know but I'm not really that bothered actually.
- 110.I: Last question. Any other suggestions about the sessions to improve them?
- 111.P: Biscuits at the end of lessons and to be able to feedback all the positives and strengths to the people I care about. That's it really.
- 112.I: OK well thanks for your time and have a really great day at school. Take care. Bye.
- 113.P: Bye bye.

Appendix G. Margie's code-book continued.

28. I: Anything else?
 29. P: Yeah, like talking about how to improve when using the line thing.
 30. I: Do you mean scale?
 31. P: Yeah that's it. I enjoyed that. Although at first I thought you were talking about dragon scales or weighing scales. I would have liked a bit more discussion about what that was.
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 42. I: OK, anything else?
43. P: No, not really.
 44. I: If you could improve our sessions what are some of your ideas?
 45. P: Maybe if I could tell to my mother and friends after each session or even my teachers so they know my targets and strengths. Can I meet with some of them after this session and share my letter you will write?
 46. I: Yes that's fine and good idea. Anything else?
47. P: A bigger room as this room is smaller. An idea I've been thinking about is using iPads in our meetings. I mean they need more creativity. Its OK just talking but I'd like more interesting stuff that would be good. I know this programme called 'puppet pals' where you um um you control puppets and it helps you talk. In our primary school we had it and it on the school iPads and some people did recordings of themselves. It helped us talk. Lets say you say something funny and others don't and your worried about this it makes it easier to talk about as its not you, its the puppet. I really likes that and I others do to. Most of my friends.
48. I: Is talking the best way?
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 52. I: How would that help?
 53. P: Instead of reading it over and over again I would see it. That would help. But I'm not a great artist.
 54. I: Any other ways?
- Handwritten notes:**
- Importance of clarification (summary)
 - Request for elaboration of scaling.
 - Importance of giving a voice
 - Active listening
 - Importance of (note taking makes this explicit)
 - Feeding this back.
 - Need for expression and for this to be listened to.
 - Need for positive psychology → New experience = ready for it!!
 - Help way for directive - Encourage more ownership of targets.
 - Request for more space/time to think things through (set targets)
 - Pace of session (Go with user's pace)
 - more systemic need (support)
 - Supportive - Praise encourages lateral thinking (wider thinking)
 - Use of iPad.
 - Environment - location
 - Puppets - creative
 - Use of open question encourages talk & empowerment
 - Drawing 'Draw my life'
 - Power - Provide UP with evidence of their process - during interview

55. P: Not singing. Drama could work in a group but would be a bit weird just with two people. You could do an act. One could be maths teacher and others could be students and you could try out your targets in practice. That might help.
56. I: How about using drama in a one to one situation?
57. P: Still possible but harder. Games might be better.
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60. I: What else?
61. P: iPad games like Temple Run, I love Temple Run 1 and 2. I suggest that you play that when you do your sessions, just for a little bit of time.
62. I: Any other games?
63. P: Well only really games like Minecraft or Sims but they cost money and take loads of time.

make sure targets are owned by YP

Realistic goals

Games

Encourage ownership using strengths

Use strengths during session

Temple Run

64. I: What was it like talking about your strengths and skills?
65. P: Well I have to think about as I hadn't really thought about it before. I mean that's what's different about the way you ask me questions. They are new to me. No one asks me it like that before. It was quite difficult but good.
66. I: How was it difficult?
67. P: Well having to have time to think which you allowed sometimes. But I would have liked a bit more time to think about it before you talked again.

Reinforced of the power of strength

model power of strength when it is modelled children / YP respond.

more time to think

opposites

68. I: Ok, what else?
69. P: Well just that really. Good I don't know.
70. I: What was it like to talk about positives?
71. P: Good because it puts you in a good mood. If you talked about negatives like my friend has the flu. I mean I would just be depressed and wouldn't want to talk at all. So yeah positives opened up the talk and made me feel good and happy.
72. I: Was there anything hard about that?
73. P: Easy and hard. Because you had to think about it really hard. Lets say I was not so good at PE but good at art, you have to really think about it for a while. To get to your real strengths and what's behind those skills. I mean like being patient and respecting people which helps with skills.

Reaffirmed importance of using a positive to begin a session

Encourage complexity of thought session should be challenging

Need for expression

74. I: Was talking about your strengths easy or hard?
75. P: Both because you still have to think about it because you know certain things and others don't and it is good to get this out of me.
76. I: Anything else?
77. P: No that's it?

answer seemed to refer here open / refined question rather than direct

* open question related to feelings

78. I: What was it like setting targets?
79. P: It was useful because it gives a purpose. Well I mean it help focus me and know that I have to do something from these sessions which is good. Let's say you don't set a target, I don't know, and then I just do it because I don't know what to do. It helps with learning. My targets was not to talk as much with my friends in French. When I am talking I mean in my lesson I remember my target and it helps. Listening more means I pay attention more, when I pay attention more this means I learn more. Which is good, I think.

Target setting useful! But needs to be led by YP or child ownership

80. I: Anything else?
81. P: It's like a fun way of motivating people to do it.
82. I: Would you have liked me to let other people know about your targets?

too leading question?

systemic need. (support)

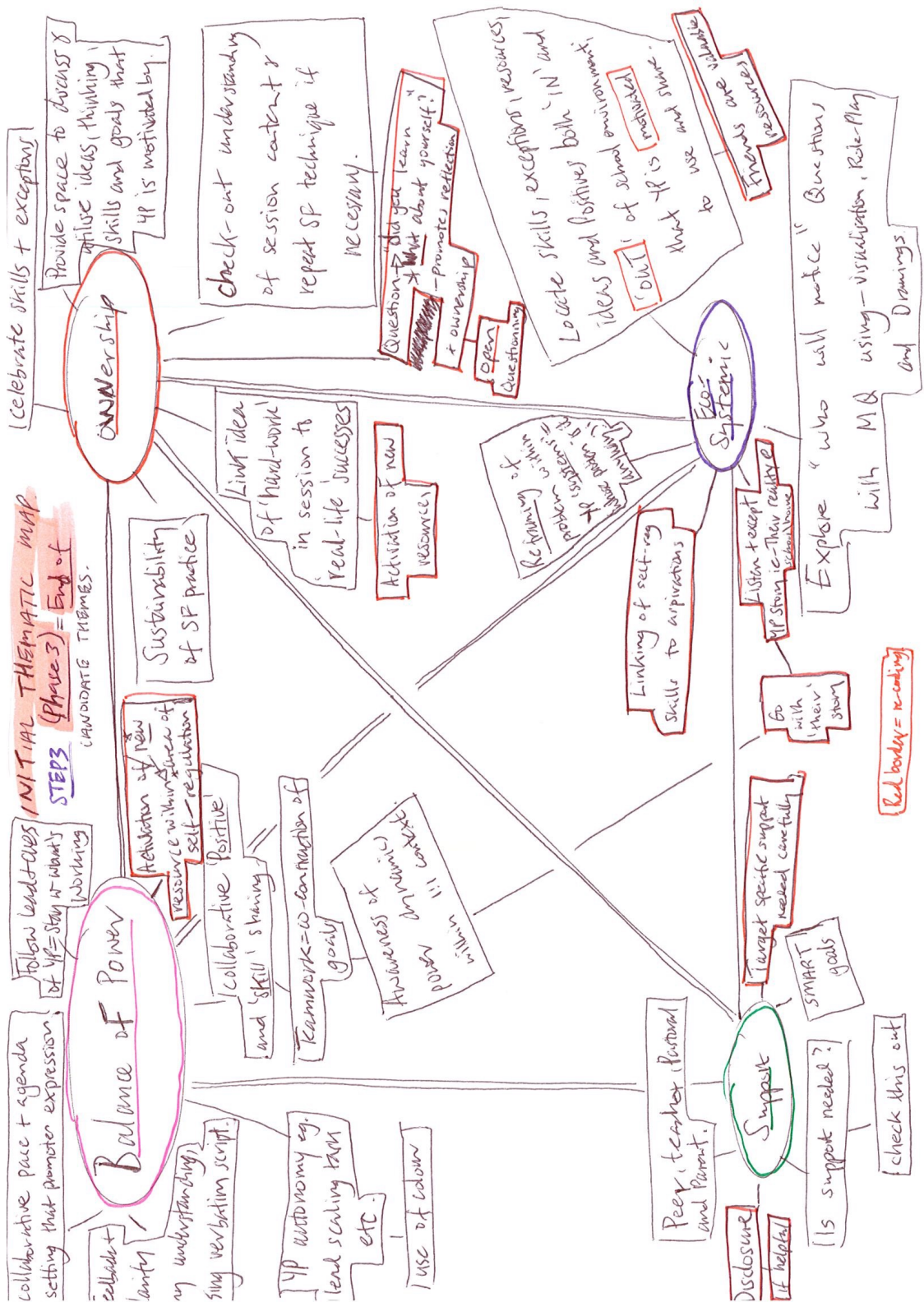
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111. P: Biscuits at the end of lessons and to be able to feedback all the positives and strengths to the people I care about. That's it really.
112. I: OK well thanks for your time and have a really great day at school. Take care. Bye.
113. P: Bye bye.
- more of miracle question
- Fun + relaxing (reference to experiencing the activity emotionally)
- Needs for
- Scaling (self-evaluation, ownership of own emotional regulation)
- Not pressured
- Re-capping of scaling etc at beginning of each session.
- Encouragement of idea of practice over-time (ie) (Not immediate results)
- Encourage use of imagination
- Space for session in library
- Reward = more time for games
- Time of sessions (ie) Fit to children / YPs subject preferences.
- Re-affirming usefulness of strength to wider contexts.
- Go wider than school system.
- Importance of other people noticing strength (systemic)
- Feedback of strength etc. more systemic

Appendix H. 'Post-it' note example of initial theme grouping.



Appendix I. Initial thematic map.



Appendix J. Copy of the final thank you letter sent to all the participants.

June 2015

Dear (name),

Thank you for participating in my study to support the development of my use of solution focused ideas. I greatly appreciate your willingness to meet with me both for the three solution focused sessions as well as the interview. Thank you also for sharing your thoughts about your experiences, which were extremely informative and useful.

It was really great to meet and work with you this term. This letter summarises some of our discussions as well as your hard work during our sessions at school.

I asked you about what you thought your strengths were. These included...

I then asked you what it was about you that made you good at these things. You mentioned that you were ...

You said that you wished you could be these things at other times you find a challenge at school. You stated that your preferred future was ... You looked at ways of making this happen and said that you needed to:

I have been really impressed with how hard you have worked when thinking about using some of your strengths to help you at school. I really hope you can continue with the progress you have made. You should be proud of your efforts! Well done!

I have greatly valued your participation in this research study and your willingness to share about your experiences. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. Again, thank you so very much for your time and effort that made this research study possible.

Good luck with the rest of school!

With warm regards,

Daniel Tully – Trainee Educational Psychologist